

Introduction

WFP Nepal will produce these bulletins in place of the previous quarterly field surveillance reports. The bulletins will provide regular updates on key issues relating to the situation of general food security in Nepal and more specifically for those populations who may be at increased risk due to their vulnerability and the impact of the conflict. The sources of information

for these bulletins are a combination of quantitative data and anecdotal information obtained from the 30 WFP field monitors now working in 32 project districts. This bulletin reviews developments in the last quarter of 2003 and the first two weeks of January 2004.

Highlights

Seasonal out migration to India is taking place in accordance with the normal annual cycle after completion of harvesting in the last quarter of 2003. It has been noted that some 28,000 people from 60 districts of Nepal, either alone or with families, were reported to have migrated to India through Nepalgunj, Mahendranagar and Dhangadhi border points from mid November 2003 to mid January 2004 averaging about 3,500 each week. Most of the people were from the far and mid western regions. This out-migration normally occurs at the beginning of the lean season in early December but appears to have been exacerbated by general insecurity. Although difficult to quantify precisely, some 7% of migrants reported their migration to be a direct result of the conflict.

Harvesting of the major crops such as paddy and maize in most of the survey districts took place in October/November. Harvests were reported to be generally good with production achieving normal levels in most places. However, restrictions on the movement of food and people as a result of frequent interrogations from both sides, combined with the imposition of a strict entry visa system by the Maoists into and within some districts have limited the flows of essential goods. This complicates and hinders the access to food for some populations. Donations of both money and food crops to the Maoists continues in many districts which can also impact adversely on food stocks and local level economic activity.

The average prices of staple commodities in survey areas appeared to have increased by about 5% at the end of 2003 as compared to the same period in 2002. However, in the far western mountain region the average price of staple food commodities appears to have increased by as much as 26 % over the same period.

At the household level, coping indices suggest that some 51% of surveyed households had a lower level of food security for September/October 2003 as com-

pared to July/August 2003. This showed some improvement in November/December with the figure coming down to some 29 % of surveyed households remaining worse off than they were prior to the interruption of the ceasefire. This indicates some improvement in the general situation following the harvest in November/December as compared to the period immediately after the breakdown of ceasefire in August. The improvement was more significant in households whose primary occupations are farming and daily wage labour as compared to households whose primary income is linked to small cottage industry and salaried jobs where the improvement appears to be significantly lower.

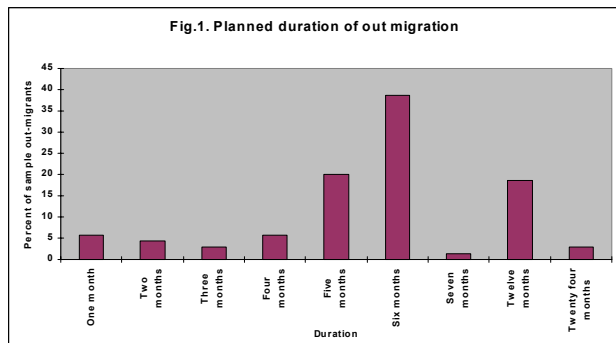
Formal clearance has been given by MLD / WFP to commence 44 Quick Impact Projects (QIP) in the districts of Bajhang, Bajura, Jumla and Kalikot. Projects cleared so far have been submitted by WVI and SAPPROS and are equivalent to some 208 mt of FFW in support of an estimated 2,500 participants/households thereby supporting some 13,500 vulnerable individuals with food assistance in the more food insecure VDCs of the targeted districts. More projects are expected to be cleared over the coming weeks which should absorb the balance of the 1500 mt of rice so far allocated for QIPs.

In coordination with key partners, WFP suspended its assistance to Food for Work and School Feeding Activities in Dailekh following the kidnap and murder of two development workers by the Maoists. The suspension will be reviewed in mid February following an investigation into the incidents and, provided adequate security for development agency workers are guaranteed by both parties in the conflict, the suspension may be lifted. WFP also suspended its support to Food for Work programmes in Bajura following the alleged looting of 6.5 mts of WFP rice by the Maoists. An investigation into this incident is underway.

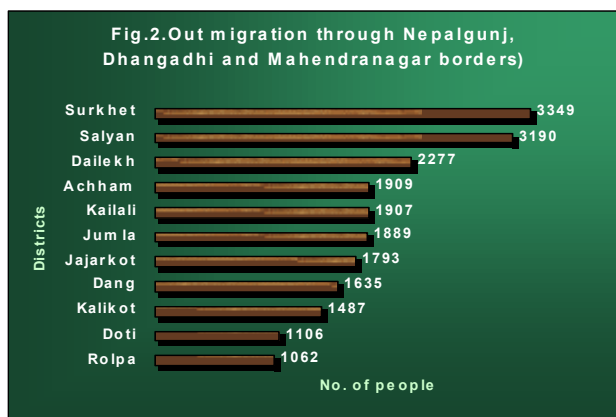
Out-migration

From mid November 2003 to mid January 2004, 70 randomly selected migrants passing through Nepalgunj, Mahendranagar and Dhangadhi border points en route to India were interviewed.

The majority (77%) of the migrants reported that they were going to India for periods of five months, six months, and one year (Fig. 1) with the intention of returning.



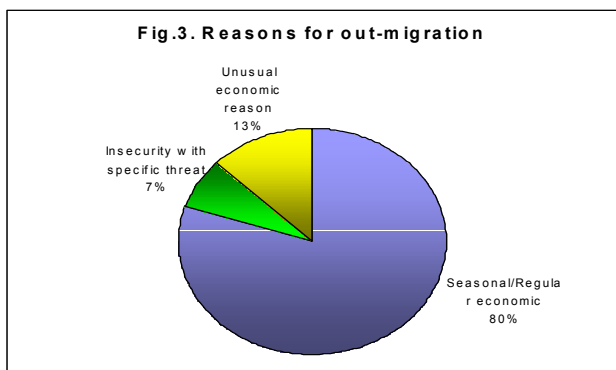
Most of the migrants passing through these border points were from Surkhet, Salyan, Dailekh, Kailali, Jumla, Jajarkot, Dang, Kalikot and Rolpa in the mid western region and from Achham and Doti in the far western region (Fig.2). Movement of people seems very limited from some districts like Bajhang and Bajura due to restrictions and harassment imposed by both sides in the conflict.



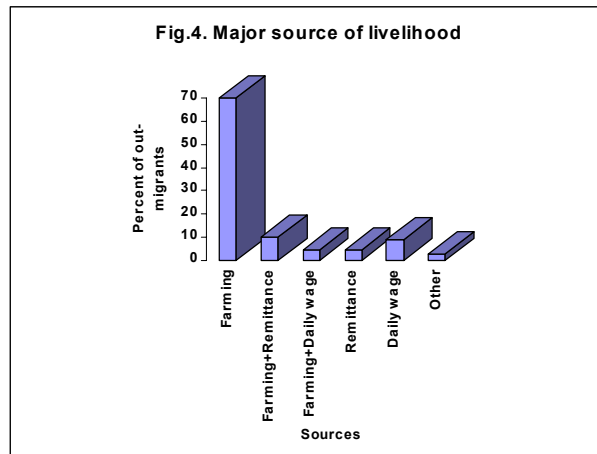
From more than 70% of the households represented from the sample group, one to two members of each family were migrating. The other 30% of migrants tended to come from families where more than 2 members were migrating.

Most migrants interviewed come from families ranging between 4 to 9 members and the typical household size from this group was 6.

There were three main reasons given for out-migration. The majority (80%) said their movement was part of the normal seasonal pattern while 13 % said that it was due to unusual economic reasons, possibly linked to the insecurity. The remaining 7% reported their movement as directly linked to specific security threats (Fig.3).



Farming was reported to be the major source of livelihood for some 70% of the migrants interviewed. Of the others, 4.3% indicated that remittances were their only source of livelihood and 8.6 % that daily wages were their only source of income. The remaining 17.1% indicated that their families were dependent upon a variety of income sources such as remittances, daily wage labour, farming and other jobs (Fig. 4).



Some 60% of the migrants stated that their wives who stayed behind were responsible for managing food while they were away from home largely surviving through the sale of agricultural produce, daily wages and remittances.

Regional Updates

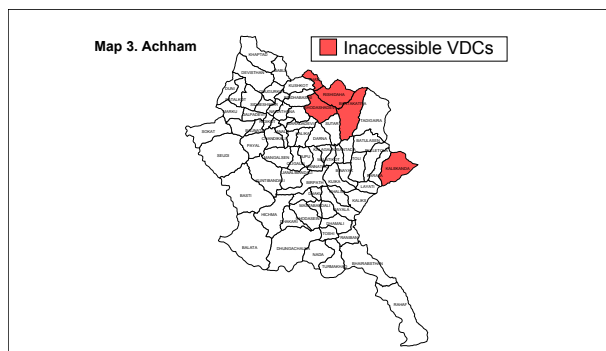
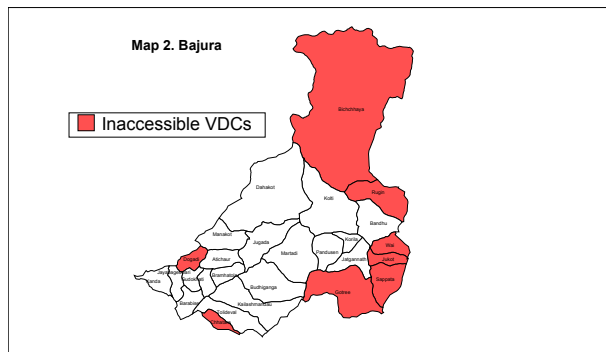
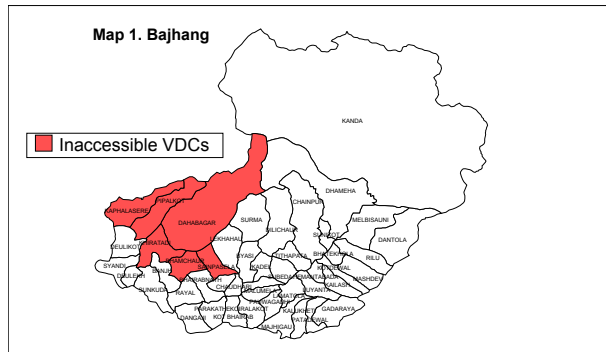
Far western hill and mountain districts (Bajhang, Bajura, Doti, Achham, Dadelhdura, Darchula and Baitadi)

Generally, food is said to be available at markets in the district headquarters and local markets in all seven of the survey districts in this region. However, some districts like Bajhang, Bajura and Achham are said to be more affected in terms of restrictions on movement of food from both the Maoists and security forces. Security forces restrict food movement from district headquarters to the interior parts of the districts while the Maoists restrict food going towards the district headquarters.

Accessibility is reported to be problem in some of the VDCs in Achham, Bajhang and Bajura (Maps 1,2,3). In Bajhang, accessibility is limited due to the need for maoist entry visas combined with the perception / possibility that outsiders could face possible charges for incidents which could be related to their visits to communities. In Bajura, the Maoists have restricted entry of outsiders because VDC level elections are being conducted in their areas of influence. There are perceived to be threats of kidnap and even murder if restrictions are not respected. Similarly, in Achham, where VDC level elections are also said to be taking

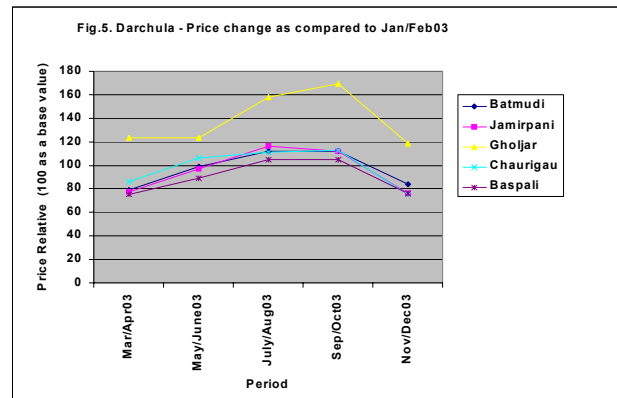
place, some 5 VDCs were said to be inaccessible due to perceived insecurity and a strict visa system.

Maoists continue to request donations from development workers from both government and non governmental organizations as well as from school teachers, bus and truck owners and business people. In Darchula, school teachers were asked to donate 5% of their salary to the Maoists while bus and truck owners were asked to pay some Rs. 6,000 per month as road tax.



In this region, Bajura has the highest proportion of survey households (26%) reporting significantly worse food security conditions in November/December 2003 as compared to the previous months and there is an increasing reliance on unsustainable coping mechanisms to meet basic needs such as limiting food portion size and collecting wild foods.

Generally, the overall prices of staple food commodities do not indicate any significant fluctuations throughout the year 2003 in this region. However, in Gholjar community of Darchula there were reports of increases in the overall price of staple food commodities by up to 65% immediately after the breakdown of the ceasefire (Fig.5) although this situation now appears to be correcting itself.



Mid western hill and mountain districts and western terai district

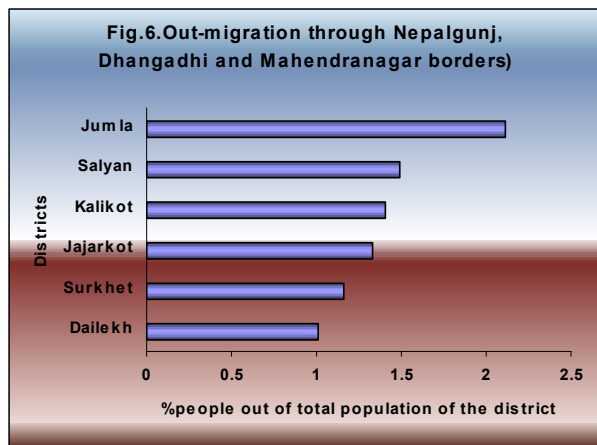
(Humla, Jumla, Mugu, Dolpa, Kalikot, Salyan, Pyuthan, Dailekh, Surkhet, Jajarkot, Rukum, Rolpa, Rupandehi)

The overall food security situation in these districts is said to be normal due to good production of seasonal crops such as paddy, maize and millet at the end of 2003 and sufficient food is said to be available in the communities during this season. However, the situation in Dailekh and some parts of Jajarkot is said to be worse in terms of food security than other districts in the region. In over half of the VDCs in Dailekh people report no household food stocks due to continuous donation of food to the Maoists combined with the restricted movement of food to the interior parts of the district. Unsustainable coping strategies such as skipping meals, staying hungry and eating wild foods are commonly being used in many parts of Dailekh and some parts of Jajarkot during this season.

Accessibility is not reported to be a real problem in most districts of this region since people can move into and within the districts even though there is an active pass/visa system imposed by the Maoists in many areas. However, In Dolpa and Surkhet, Maoists have forbidden people to move into some parts of the districts where land mines are said to have been laid.

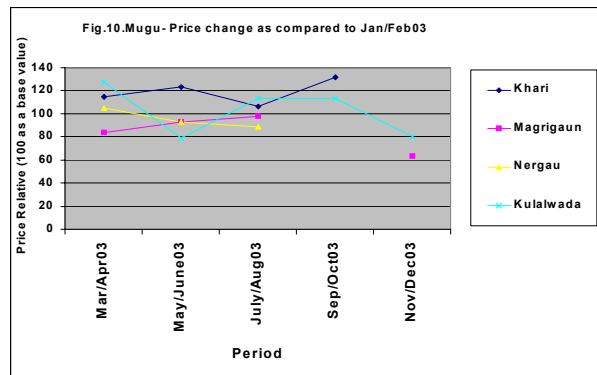
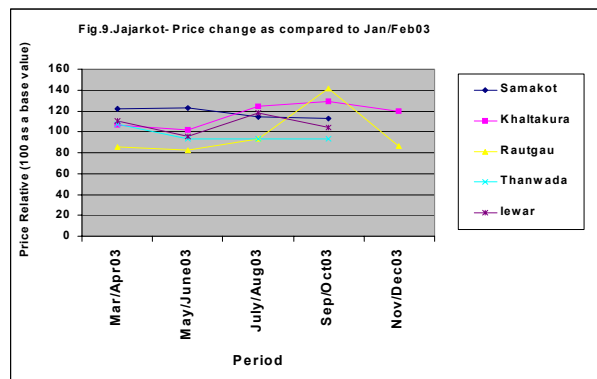
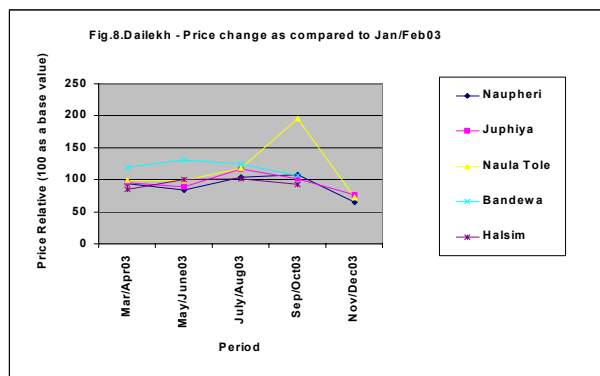
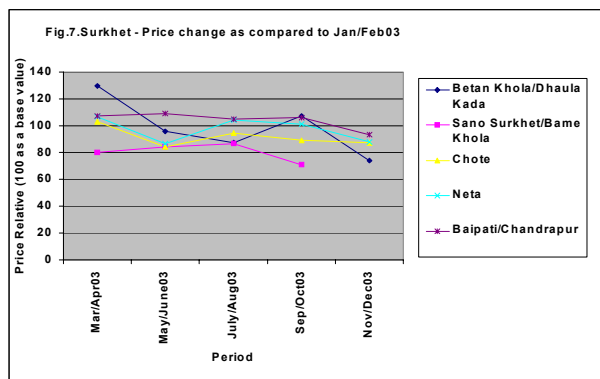
In Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot, Surkhet, Mugu, Salyan and Pyuthan, donating cash and seasonal food to the Maoists is commonplace. In some of these districts, such as Dailekh and Jajarkot, this seems to have adversely affected food availability at the community level. In Dailekh, individual contributions have been reported to be as high as Rs. 50,000. Teachers in Surkhet were reported to pay 5% of their salary to the Maoists.

As per the government records at border points, the mid western hill and mountain districts, with the exception of Jumla, were all reported to have less than 2% (Fig.6) of their population migrating to India during the period from mid November 2003 to second week of January 2004.



Within the mid western hill and mountain region, household coping indices indicate that up to 20% of survey households in Dailekh, Jajarkot and Surkhet were facing significantly worse food security conditions in November/December 2003 as compared to the previous months despite the good harvest.

The overall price of staple food commodities appeared to have fluctuated significantly in some survey communities of Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot and Mugu (Fig.7,8,9,10) throughout 2003. However, towards the end of the year, the overall price of these staple commodities was decreasing in all the survey districts in this region due to the harvest.

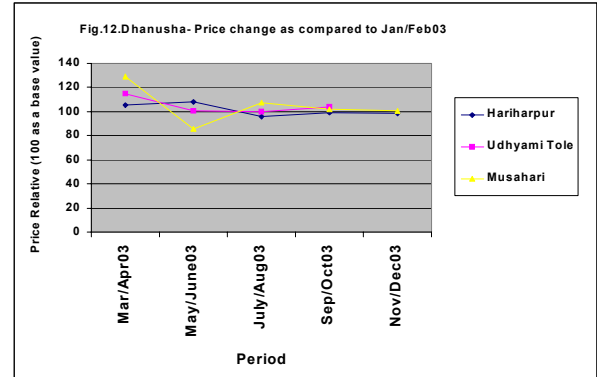
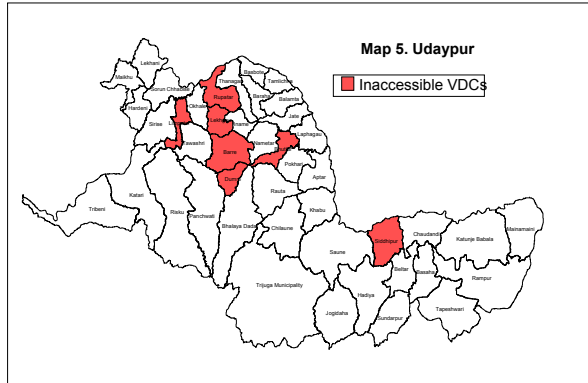
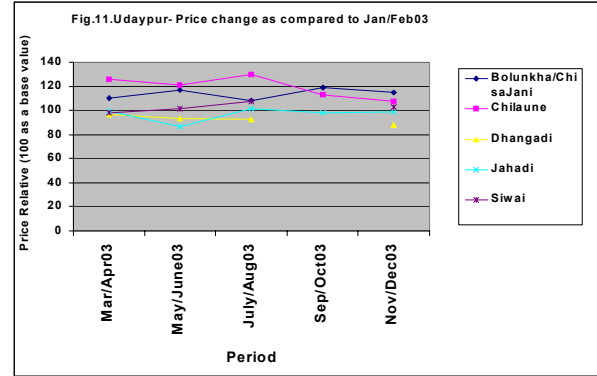
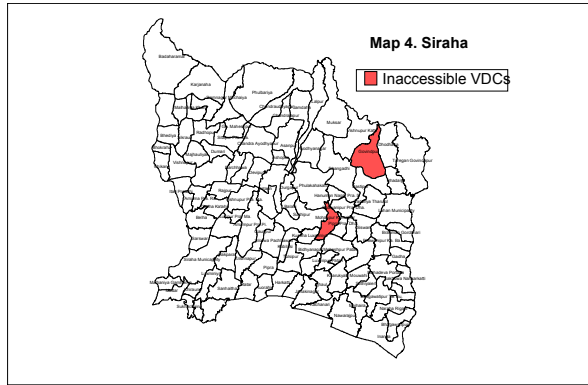


Central eastern terai, hill and mountain districts

(Dhanusha, Parsa, Siraha, Saptari, Udaypur, Makwanpur, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa Kavrepalanchok, Ramechhap and Nuwakot)

The food security situation of the districts in this region appears normal. Good harvesting of paddy crops followed by the planting of wheat crops have contributed towards a good availability of food and creation of work opportunities. Cash and food donations to the Maoists are quite commonplace especially in some hill and mountain districts such as Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Kavrepalanchok, Dolakha, and Udaypur.

However, the overall security situation is said to have deteriorated in this region with an increasing number of incidents reported over recent months. Nevertheless, accessibility is not a problem in this region except for some parts of Siraha and Udaypur districts (Map 4,5). In Siraha, two VDCs are reported as inaccessible due to increasing Maoist activity while in Udaypur, poor accessibility to three VDCs was said to be due to search operations being carried out by security forces. Similarly, travel to some VDCs in Nuwakot require a permit from the Maoists.



The overall price variation of staple food commodities in the survey communities does not reveal any

significant fluctuations in this region during year 2003 with only minor variations in some survey communities (Fig. 11, 12).