



Food Security Situation in the Eastern Terai Districts of Saptari and Siraha

Since the paddy crop failure of last summer in Saptari and Siraha, the food security situation for many poor households in these two districts in the Eastern Terai remains precarious. The current floods across the Terai have affected many parts of Saptari and Siraha exacerbating the situation.

Unfortunately, ethnic tension and insecurity has prevented WFP from conducting an in-depth emergency food security assessment in these districts and to date, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people most in need. The current flood situation may provide an opportunity to do so.

Despite the security situation in the Eastern Terai, the WFP field surveillance monitor collected household level information during the past 6 months from 70 randomly selected households in Saptari and Siraha. The sample is too small to provide reliable statistical information on the food security status of the population. Results should therefore be further verified and carefully interpreted. Never the less, these results provide some indication of the magnitude of the problem and provide a rough baseline for a rapid food security assessment.

TRENDS IN NUMBER OF FOOD INSECURE

Graph 1 shows the total number of people estimated at risk to food insecurity since October last year until July 2007 in Saptari and Siraha.

After the drought episode of last summer, the estimated number of people vulnerable to food insecurity was very high at almost 690,000. After the harvesting of the paddy crop and the subsequent bumper wheat harvest, the situation for many households improved rapidly. The number of people

vulnerable to food insecurity at the end of May decreased to about 8,500. Many of these people are landless families relying on agricultural or day labour for their livelihood. However, many households have not yet fully recovered from the shock of last year's drought and currently many have already depleted their food grain stocks. With the next main harvest not starting before end of October, the estimated number of people at risk from now until the harvest has increased to 207,500.

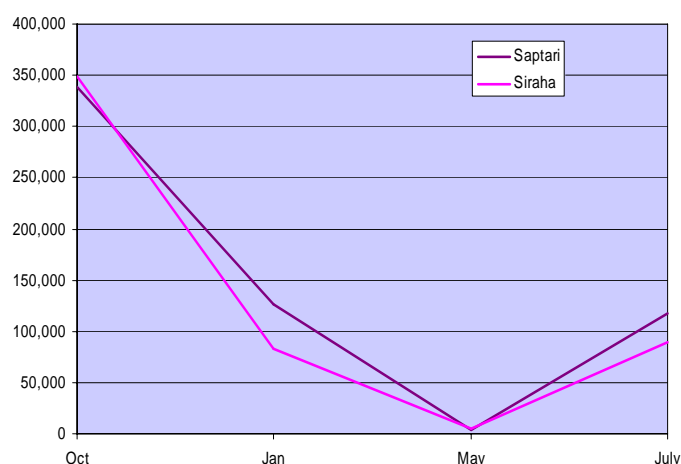
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Table 1 provides some key household

Household information	
Household size	6.5
Not educated:	
Mother	72.5%
Father	47.8%
Own land	42.9%
Average size	20.8 Kathha
Own livestock	88.6%
Average number of goats	2.4
Average number of cows	2.1
Toilet facilities:	
Open field	61.4%
River, pond, lake	21.4%
Closed latrine	11.4%
Main source of drinking water:	
Tubewell/borehole	88.6%

Table 1 – Household indicators

The average household size is 6.5. The educational achievement is very low particularly for women with 72.5 % of mothers not having received any education at all. About half of the population in Saptari and Siraha have access to land. However, landownership is small with on average households



Graph 1 – Estimated number of people at risk

owning only 20.8 kattha of land (0.7 ha). Most households own some livestock. Sanitation conditions are not good. More than 80% of households do not make use of latrines. Tube-wells or boreholes are the main sources of drinking water in this area.

VULNERABILITY AND COPING

During the first half of this year almost 93% of the 70 sampled households reported that their access to food was compromised due to external shocks, mainly drought, conflict, frequent bandhs, and lack of employment opportunities.

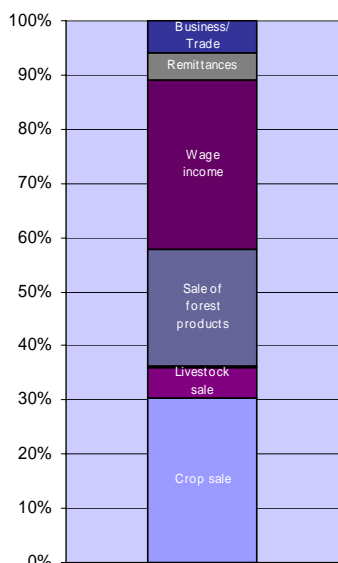
A little more than 63% of households reported that their food stocks are insufficient to cover more than 1 month. Almost 30% have sufficient food stocks for 1 to 3 months. Only 7.2% have food supplies lasting more than 3 months.

Graph 2 show the extent to which traditional coping behaviour is practiced in the Eastern Terai. Most households switch to cheaper and less preferred food items during lean periods. Almost 40% reported that they reduced meal portions or the number of meals eaten at least once a week. Selling of household assets and out-migration

were also commonly reported copying strategies.

LIVELIHOODS

Casual farm labour, crop farming and collection of natural resources, such as fire wood and cow dung, are among the primary livelihood strategies in Saptari and Siraha. Almost all households (98.6%) reported that their combined household income this year was less than normal. The main income sources are wage income and crop sales, followed by sale of forest products (see Graph 3).



Graph 3 – Sources of income

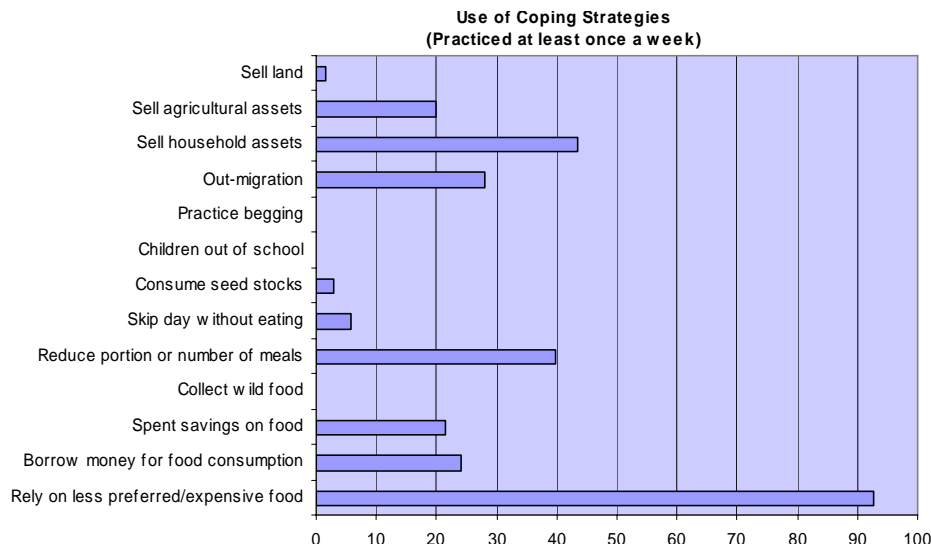
There is a high dependency on markets, which is the main source of food for about 53% of all households. The remaining households obtain most of their food through their own production.

Graph 4 shows the consumption pattern of food. Rice is the staple food eaten every day, usually with vegetables and dhal (lentils). Fish, meat and eggs are rarely consumed by the sample households as are fresh fruit and ghee.

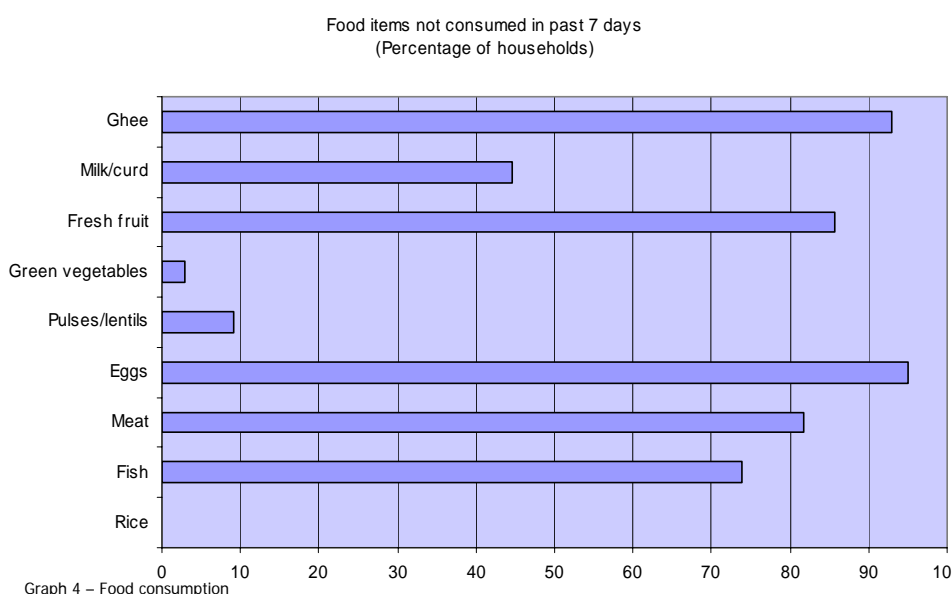
TARGETING THE FLOOD RESPONSE

In the short term it is likely that the flood will further exacerbate the food security situation of the population. The longer-term food security outcome will depend on the impact of the flood on the crop production.

Current estimates on the number of flood affected people in Saptari and Siraha are presented in Table 2.



Graph 2 – Use of coping strategies



Graph 4 – Food consumption

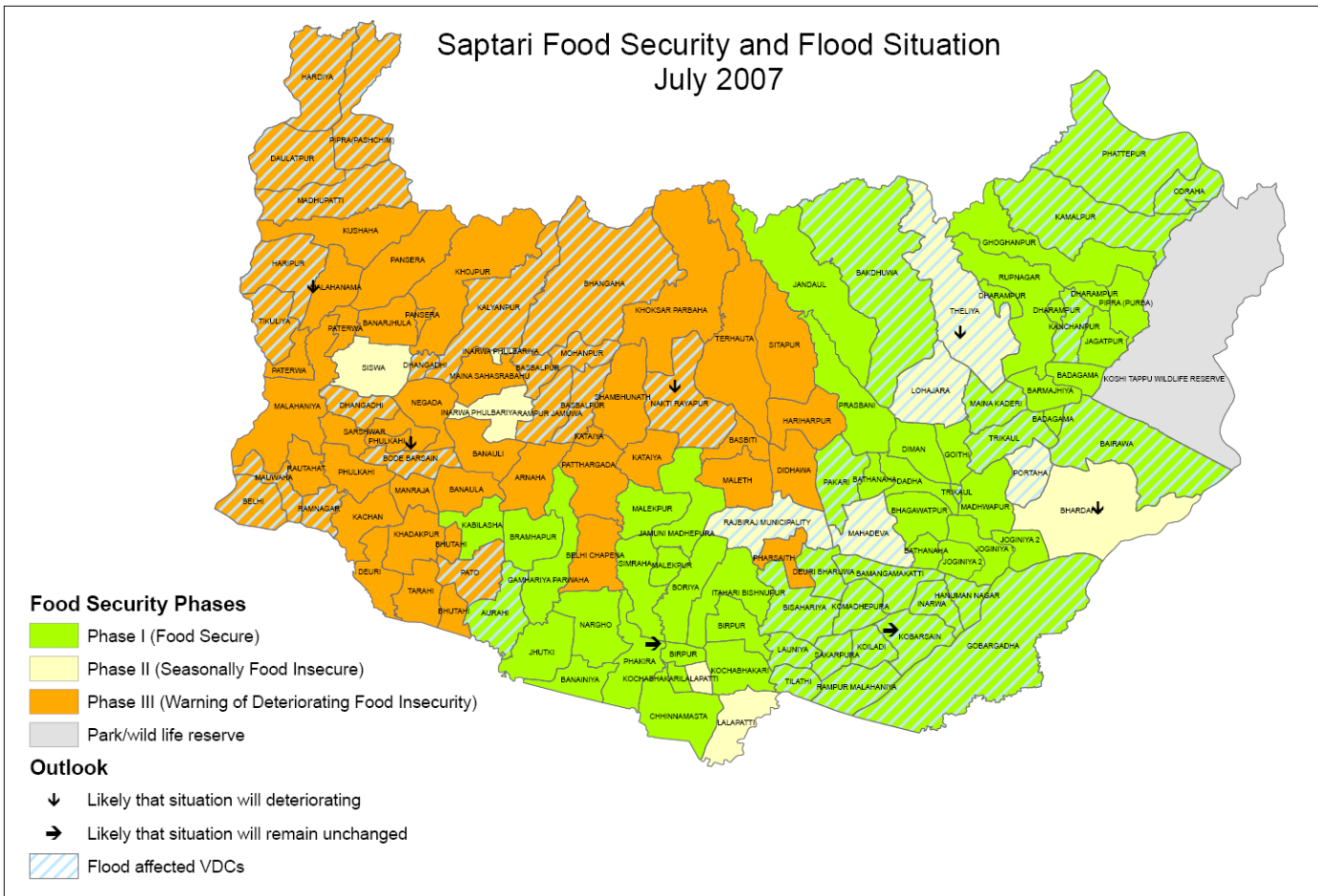
The WFP Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System provides the latest information regarding the area under phase 3 (warning of deteriorating food insecurity) or phase 4 (acute food crisis) and the number of people at risk in these areas. By overlaying the food security phase classification maps of Saptari and Siraha and the information received regarding the extent of flooding in these districts, priority areas for food assistance were determined (see Map 1 and 2). It also provides an indication on the magnitude of the number of people in need of emergency food aid which is determined by combining the VDC level information on the estimated number of food insecure people with the estimated number of flood affected people, making the assumption that the same communities are affected.

From 21 – 25 August 2007, WFP, UNICEF and Save the Children will undertake a rapid assessment mission in the Eastern Terai which will confirm the proposed targeting areas and number of people in need of assistance. The mission will also cover the districts of Dhanusa, Mohattari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara and Parsa. Results will further guide the implementation of WFP's flood emergency response in the Central and Eastern Terai.

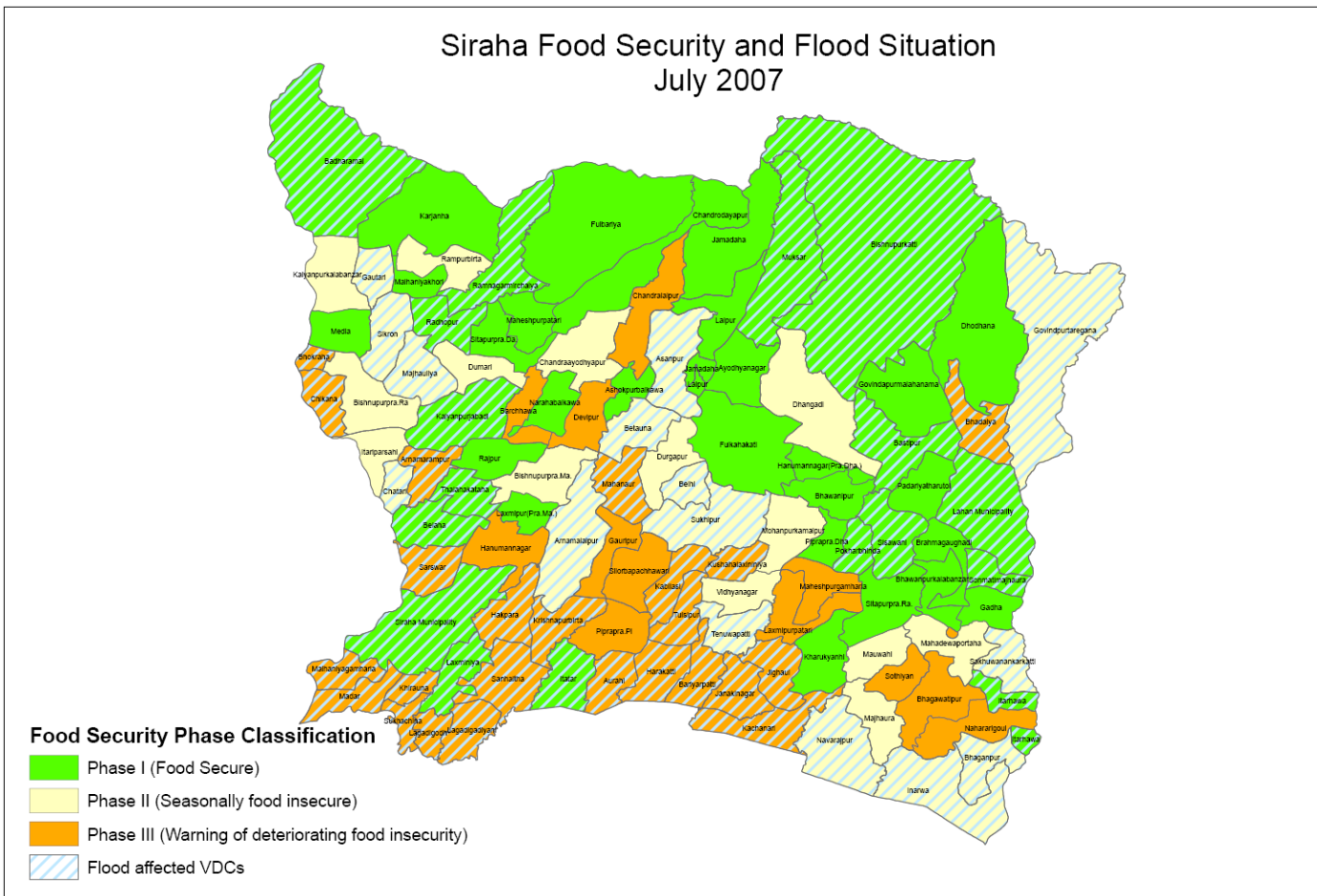
	Flood affected	In need of immediate food aid
Saptari	49,990	11,420
Siraha	65,000 (est.)	28,690 (est.)

Table 2 – Estimates on flood affected people

Emergency Updates are produced by WFP Nepal as part of its Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System.
All information products produced by the Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System are available on the UN Nepal Information platform or on the following WFP website: <http://vam.wfp.org/country/docs?country=524>



Map 1 – Saptari



Map 2 – Siraha