

Emergency Update

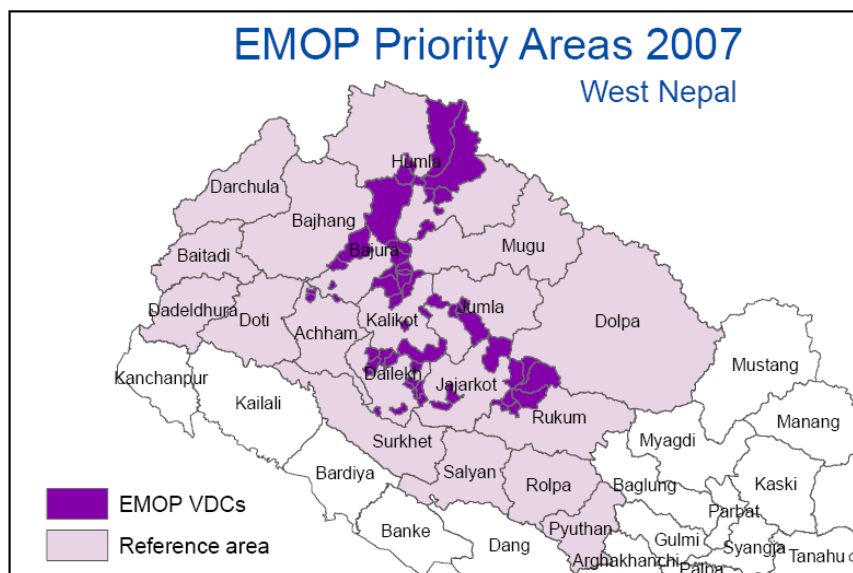


United Nations World Food Programme
Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System

Emergency Update
February 2007

Household Food Security in EMOP Target Areas

In January 2007, WFP initiated a retargeting exercise to support the extension of WFP's emergency operation (EMOP) to provide assistance to drought-affected populations in Mid- and Far-Western Nepal. Seven district-level consultations were conducted where stakeholders identified and prioritized the communities in most need of food aid. This information was cross-referenced with data obtained from WFP field monitors. The result is the VDC targeting plan referenced in Map 1. In total 24,866 households in these communities are estimated to need emergency food aid (see also the WFP Food Security Bulletin, No 16).



Map 1 – EMOP priority areas and reference area

This Emergency Update provides information on the livelihood status, household security situation, crop situation, and coping mechanisms used by communities targeted for EMOP food assistance in comparison to communities outside of the target EMOP area. By comparing the data from the two communities, the desperate situation of households located within the EMOP target area is evident.

Information presented within this report is based upon household food security data collected during the first half of February 2007 from 310 households within communities targeted under the extended emergency, and reference data collected from 560 households living outside of the target areas, but

within the Mid- and Far-Western Hills and Mountains (see Map 1).

WHO ARE LIVING IN THE EMOP AREAS?

Based on the perception of the WFP field monitors, 63.4% of the people living in the EMOP areas are extreme poor as compared to only 13.9% in the reference area. About 18.3% of all households can be classified as non-poor and fall in the lower and upper middle class (see table 1).

Table 2 provides a comparison of indicators regarding household demography and socio-economic status. Across the board, households in EMOP areas are worse off than those in the reference area. In EMOP areas, almost 16% of households are female-headed as compared to 9.1% in the reference area, due to an increase in out-migration (see page 3). The average number of people sharing the same cooking pot (8.0) is also considerably higher than in the reference area (6.7). Almost 37% of the population belongs to the Dalit caste. Seventy eight percent of mothers have not

Household wealth category based on perceptions		
Wealth category	WFP target area	Reference area
Extreme poor	63.4	13.9
Poor	18.3	39.6
Lower middle	13.1	24.7
Upper middle	5.2	18.3
Well off	-	3.6

Table 1 – Wealth category

received any form of education. Although most households in EMOP areas own land and livestock, the average amount of land owned is too small to sustain the household.

Defecation in the open field is commonly practiced by 79.1% of the households as compared to 65.5% in the reference area. Almost half of the population get their drinking water from

Household demography and socio-economic status		
	WFP target area	Reference area
Female headed households	15.9	9.1
No of people eating from same kitchen	8.0	6.7
Caste/ethnicity:		
Brahmin/Chhetri	52.9	58.5
Dalit	36.9	24.3
Janjati	8.7	14.3
Education:		
Mother no education	78.3	69.7
Father no education	53.4	39.0
Assets:		
Own land	88.2	94.8
Own livestock	90.9	90.7
Water and Sanitation:		
Defecate in open field	79.1	65.5
Drinking water from open water source	47.9	30.6
Drinking water from public tap	47.6	59.2

Table 2 – Household indicators

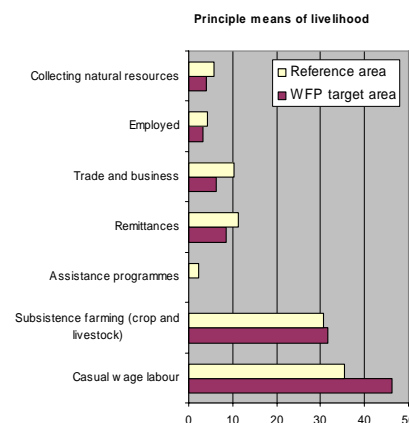


Chart 1 – Principle means of livelihood

a pond, stream, river or lake, while the other half use a public water tap.

The principle means of livelihood for 46.2% of the households in the targeted area is casual wage labour. This is followed by subsistence farming which is a key livelihood strategy for 31.6% of all households. Remittances, trade and business are key livelihood strategies for 8.6% and 6.4% of households respectively. However, these livelihoods are less commonly practiced than in the reference area (see chart 1).

HOW BAD IS THE HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY SITUATION?

In the EMOP areas, 88.7% of households responded that they had faced problems of drought, irregular rainfall and hailstorms which affected their food supply. Unavailability of food is a major problem faced by 71.6% of the households. Almost 94% of households responded that the combination of all external shocks (including lack of employment, illness, landslides, and death of family member) resulted in a food shortage at the household level. This is 30% more households than in the reference area (see chart 2). More than 85% claimed that the food shortages were more severe that last year, almost twice as many as in the reference area.

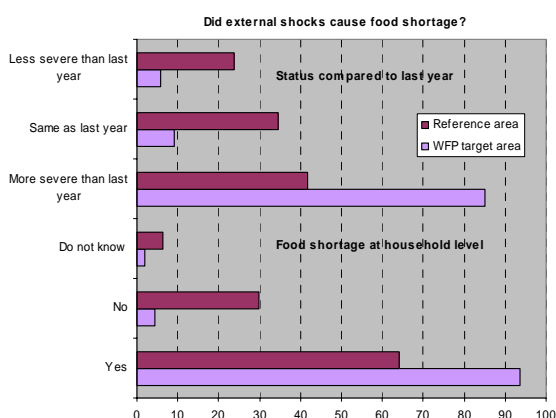


Chart 2 – Impact of shocks on household's access to food

Within the EMOP areas, a physical check by the WFP field monitors confirmed that a majority of households have depleted most of their food stocks. Table 3 shows the average quantities of food grain stocks available at a household level compared to a

household in the reference area.

Assuming a food grain intake of 500 grams per person per day and using average household size as presented in Table 2, household food grain stocks are estimated to be sufficient for only 15 days for those households in the

Household food grain stocks		
	WFP target area	Reference area
Rice	19.4	143.7
Wheat	0.5	16.8
Wheat flour	1.0	3.1
Maize	15.0	109.5
Millet	15.6	52.9
Barley	6.1	11.1
Buck wheat	2.3	12.0
Total cereals (kg)	59.9	349.1
No of days sufficient food	15.0	104.2

Table 3 – Average food grain stocks

EMOP areas. In comparison, the average household in the reference area has sufficient food for at least three months.

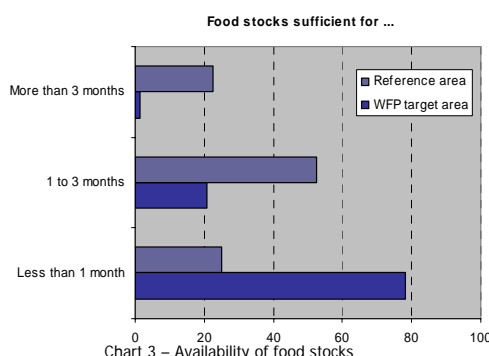


Chart 3 – Availability of food stocks

When households were asked about how long their food stocks would last, almost 80% of households in the EMOP areas responded that their food stocks would be depleted within a period of one month as compared to 25% of households in the reference area (see chart 3).

WHAT IS THE CURRENT CROP SITUATION OUTLOOK?

Wheat and barley are the main winter crops produced in the EMOP areas. More than 90% of farmers reported that their main crop was in a poor condition due to insufficient rainfall. Almost 90% of these farmers expect a decrease in production of their main winter crop by more than 20% (see chart 4). The recent rainfall may improve this otherwise depressing outlook somewhat.

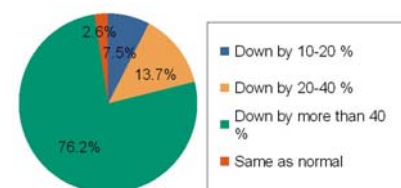


Chart 4 – Winter crop production outlook

WHY CAN'T THE FOOD INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS COPE WITHOUT OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE?

The resilience of a household to external shocks, such as drought and adverse weather conditions, depends on its socio-economic status. Poor and socially excluded groups will be less able to

On average households have food grain stock sufficient for only 15 days.

absorb shocks than well positioned and better off households. As presented in table 1 and 2, 81.7% of households in the EMOP areas have been classified as poor or extreme poor and almost 37% belong to the Dalit caste. This would indicate a limited resilience to external shocks and thus a higher incidence of

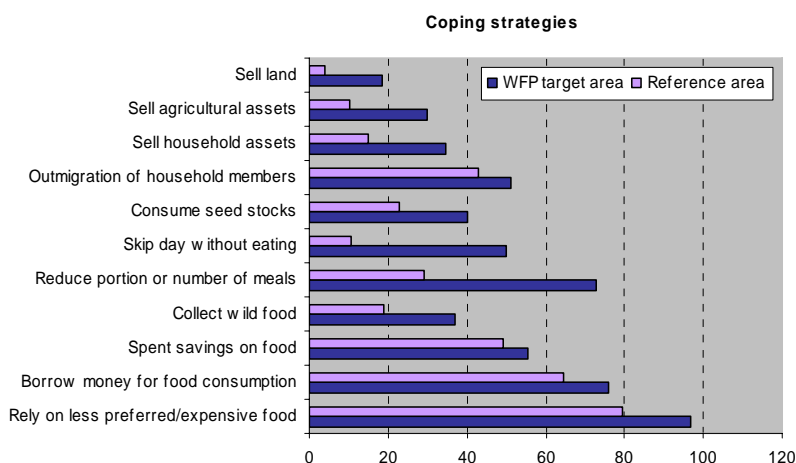


Chart 5 – Use of coping strategies

households using irreversible and damaging coping strategies, such as extensive borrowing and sales of productive assets. Use of these kinds of irreversible coping strategies undermines the long-term productive potential of poor households and may lead to chronic food insecurity or complete deprivation.

Chart 5 presents a list of coping strategies in EMOP and reference areas and shows the percentage of households that practice these strategies at least once a week. For more permanent strategies such as the sale of land and assets and out-migration it records whether this activity has occurred within the past month.

It becomes immediately evident that almost all households in the target area have been affected with 96.6% of household shifting their consumption to less preferred and expensive food. More than three quarters had to borrow money for consumption purposes and almost 73% have reduced their food intake. More worrying is the fact that half of the population experienced at least one day a week without any meal at all and almost 37% relied on the collection of wild foods as a source of food. More than half of the households have one or more family members who have out-migrated in search of jobs. Irreversible coping strategies are also widespread with over one third of the households selling agricultural and household assets. A very high number of households (18.5%) reported sale of

land, as compared to 4% in the reference area.

This high level of coping intensity justifies external support and income transfers in the form of food aid. This will secure the families' food needs and as such prevent further deterioration in their livelihoods and longer-term suffering.

WHAT ARE THE CONSUMPTION AND NUTRITION OUTCOMES?

The deterioration in food security had a major impact on the consumption behaviour of people living in the areas affected by drought and other adverse weather conditions. Chart 6 shows the percentage of households, within the EMOP areas, that within a period of one week did not consume a particular food item. It compares this with consumption patterns of households in the reference area. It immediately becomes clear that, even in the reference area, people do not follow a particular protein, vitamin and mineral rich diet. Fish, meat, eggs and fresh fruit are rarely consumed.

Consumption habits are even worse in the EMOP areas where consumption patterns have drastically deteriorated. Lentils and pulses, traditionally part of the Nepali plate, were not consumed by 51.8% of households within the last seven days prior to the date of interview. Similarly, we see a large decline in vegetable consumption (64.5% of households did not consume

Health and nutrition status of children under 5	
Nutrition status:	%
Severe acute malnutrition (MUAC < 11 cm)	9.1
Moderate acute malnutrition (MUAC between 11 and 12.5 cm)	44.1
At risk (MUAC between 12.5 and 13.5)	24.1
Global malnutrition rate	53.2
Health status:	
Diarrhea	43.7
Fever/cough	63.2

Table 4 – Health and nutrition indicators

fresh vegetables) as well as consumption of meat, milk and ghee.

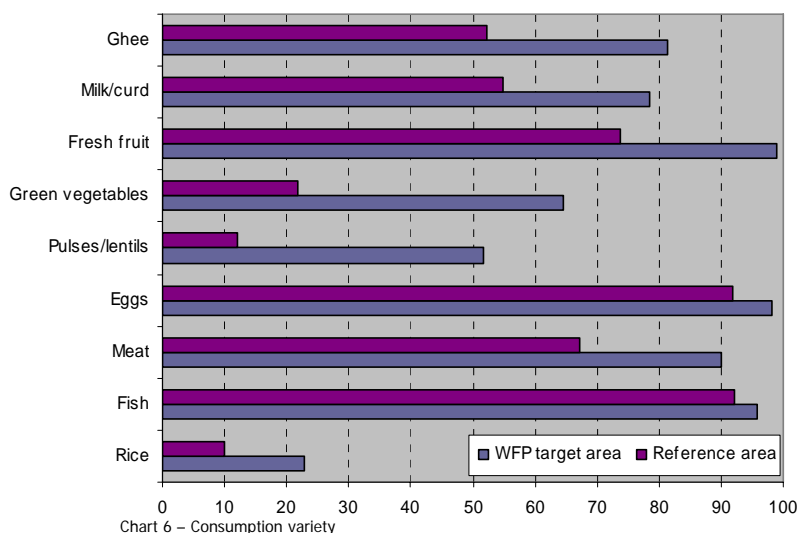
More than 53% of children are malnourished and a further 24.1% of children are at risk of becoming malnourished.

Reduction in food intake and variety has an affect on the health and nutritional status of the population. The nutrition status of children under the age of 5 was screened by using Mid-Upper-Arm-Circumference (MUAC) measurements. Table 4 shows the results. More than 53% of children are malnourished according to the MUAC measurements and a further 24.1% are at risk of becoming malnourished. Just over 9% of children under the age of 5 are severely malnourished within the EMOP areas.

CONCLUSION

Harvesting of the main winter crops (wheat and barley) will not start before April/May. As the data shows, food stocks are already near depletion and households have started deploying damaging coping strategies in order to obtain food. Malnutrition rates are high. In order to address the immediate food needs of drought-affected families, WFP will continue emergency food aid distributions in order to improve the food security status of households in target areas. As a part of the emergency operations, households will be provided with a two-month family ration sufficient to carry them over to the next harvesting season.

Percentage of households that did not consume (7 days recall)



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