



Key Findings

- ✓ Nepal's summer paddy crop production increased by 17%.
- ✓ Initial reports indicate that the winter crop will yield substantially lower crops in the Mid and Far Western region, due to late winter rains.
- ✓ Market Prices have increased significantly despite these good crop yields leaving an estimated 3.8 million extremely vulnerable.
- ✓ Additionally, many areas in Mid- and Far-West suffered from poor paddy production and are facing increasing food insecurity. The outlook for the winter crop production in many of these areas is also worrying.
- ✓ Many of the extreme poor households in flood affected areas are still struggling to cope with the longer-term affects of the flood.
- ✓ Average household food stocks are down by half compared to a year ago.
- ✓ More households are facing difficulties in accessing sufficient food. Coping strategies are more frequently adopted compared to last quarter and more households find it difficult to find employment.

Editorial

The past couple of months were characterized by ongoing *bandhs* in the Terai, resulting in shortages of fuel and other essential items and rising food prices across Nepal. Price rises in coarse rice were further exacerbated by the ongoing ban on export of non-basmati rice from India and the global cereal price hikes (see WFP Market Watch No. 3). Inadequate supply and price increases in food and non-food items have had a significant impact on the overall food security situation, particularly as the February- March period is already a lean season in many rural areas as the population waits for the wheat harvest.

On the positive side, the production of summer crops was good despite the monsoon floods that hit most of the Terai districts in July-August 2007. The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) preliminary estimates for the increase in total paddy, maize, and millet production compared to last year are 16.80%, 3.23%, and 2.21% respectively.

Initial reports from Hill and Mountain districts in the Mid- and Far-West indicate that the winter crop will yield substantially lower crops in these areas, due to late winter rains. An update on the winter crop production will be provided in the upcoming Crop Situation Update (No. 8) which will be issued in

the beginning of April. Preliminary expectations are presented on page 4 of this bulletin.

In rural areas, the current food security situation is largely based upon production of the summer crops, maize and rice, as winter wheat has yet to be harvested. Notwithstanding the good summer crop production outcomes at the national level, in many areas, especially in the Far- and Mid-West, summer crops were highly affected by localized disasters, including irregular rainfall, hailstorm, landslides and diseases. In some areas this resulted in production losses of more than 40% (see WFP Crop Situation Update, No. 7). It's the population in these particular areas that are now at risk of food insecurity.

This bulletin provides the latest update on the food security situation in 39 districts, which are covered by the field surveillance system of the WFP Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System (FSMAS). In addition selected household indicators are presented.

Food Security Phase Classification Map

With support from the SENAC project (Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity within WFP), the methodology used to develop the quarterly food security phase classification maps will be strengthened. In the next 6 months, WFP will address some of the weaknesses in the current approach, specifically with regard to consensus building at the district level and identifying objectively verifiable indicators at the community level with thresholds that can be used to better determine the food security phase classification of each VDC. The project aims to (i) set-up food co-ordination mechanisms at the district level to verify the food security phase classification maps, (ii) improve the map layouts and (iii) ensure standardization across the different districts in order for these maps to be a reliable basis for early warning and targeting of interventions.



Food Security Hot Spots

Classification of the food security status is based upon a set of reference characteristics. A description of these characteristics and the alert level definitions are provided on the last page of this bulletin. Classifications are made by WFP field monitors who have been trained to ensure consistency in data recording. Verification is done through consultation with district government officials local and international NGOs and triangulation with other data sources.

TRENDS

As reported in the Market Watch No. 3, the household food security situation across the country is worrying given the recent price hike in food commodities despite the good paddy harvest. This may have serious consequences for the food security situation particularly those of the extreme poor. The number of people at risk of food insecurity has recently increased in the Hill and Mountain districts of the Far-West, Karnali, Rapti and Bheri.

The January-February period can generally be characterized as a period of food shortages for many households in the Hill and Mountain districts, with household food stock being limited or nearing depletion as the winter wheat and barley crop have not yet been harvested. To cope, traditionally, people go out for seasonal migration to India or other cities in Nepal during this time of the year. The household food security monitoring data collected this year indicate that the average household food stocks have gone down by half in districts covered by the WFP field surveillance (November 2007 to January 2008) compared to the same period last year.

I. THE KARNALI

The food security situation in the Karnali is deteriorating compared to the situation in the previous quarter (Food Security Bulletin, No.18). However, as reported in the Crop Situation Update No. 7, the main summer crop production of paddy and maize was overall better in the Karnali as compared to last year due to good monsoon rains. This has allowed many

households to extend sustenance for a little while longer during this lean period. However, food stocks are currently starting to run low and food prices have increased substantially which put much of the Karnali in the seasonally food insecurity phase. Areas in which the summer crop was affected due to localized disasters including insufficient or late rainfall, pest and diseases, and/or hailstorms are currently in a warning situation of deteriorating household food insecurity.

The food security situation in **Jumla** is currently better than it was one year ago. A few VDCs in the south (Ghode Mahadev, Malika Thanta, and Tamti) and some areas in the north are currently at a seasonal food insecurity phase. In these VDCs only the maize crop was good as much of the paddy was affected by blast which resulted in losses between 20-40%.

Kalikot is mostly food secure due to generally good paddy and maize production. The exceptions are the VDCs of Pakha, Chhapre, and Mehelmudi (Ward 1, 3, 4). Here the paddy crop failed (losses of 60% or more) due to blast disease. People have exhausted their food stocks, extensive borrowing is practiced by the affected households, and there is more than usual out-migration of people to India. Some 8,000 people are estimated to be at risk of food insecurity. Likewise the outlook for Dhoulagoh, Nanikot, Thirpu, and Ramnakot VDCs is concerning. These VDCs have been affected by drought for more than three years.

The VDCs in upper and middle **Dolpa** are as usual food insecure. This is a perennial problem during this time of the year.

The eastern half of **Mugu** district is seasonally food insecure as the millet and *Kaguno* production decreased by around 20% due to pest infestation. The VDCs Bhie, Natharpu, Photu, Jima, Ruga, and Rowa are facing an increased food insecurity threat as paddy and millet crops were badly affected due to hailstorm and pest. It is estimated that more than 2,000 people have already

left the area for migration to India. Severe malnourished children have been observed in the area. ACF (Action Contre la Faim-INGO) is in the process of identifying the severe malnourished children and providing support. An estimated 12,000 people are at risk of food insecurity. The outlook for these communities is not promising as the winter crop production is expected to be poor due to late and insufficient rainfall this year.

The VDCs in northern, central, and southern belts of **Humla**, including Thehe, Kharpunath, Shrimasta, Syada, Chhipra, Lali, Rodikot, Baraigaun, Maila, Madana, Kalika, Shrinagar, and Jaira VDCs are at the warning level of deteriorating food insecurity due to very poor summer crop production. People are running out of food stocks. Some 25,000 people are estimated to be at risk of food insecurity.

II. FAR WESTERN HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

Several areas in the south of **Darchula** (Iyarikot, Gwani, Boharigaun, Kharkanda, and Rithpatachaur VDCs) were badly affected by landslides. Some 323 households completely lost their summer crops. An estimated 2,000 people are at risk of food insecurity.

Poor households living far from the road-heads and markets in **Baitadi**, **Dadeldhura** and **Doti** are increasingly facing problems due to rising food prices. The FSMAS data shows that *Dalit* and landless communities in **Dadeldhura** spend some 80-90% of migrant remittances on food.

In **Achham**, the VDCs in the north-east, north-west and south are seasonally food insecure. Paddy production was moderate to poor due to lack of irrigation and productive land and household food stocks are running low. Some 16,000 people have migrated to India (60% more than last year). In Khaptad and Devasthan VDCs about 125 households are still sheltering in temporary camps since the landslide in August 2006. They are requesting for resettlement to a safer place.



The eastern and northern parts of **Bajura** continue to be affected by drought and crop production was very low. Poverty levels are high in these areas. An estimated 21,450 people in Sappata, Rugin, Bandhu, Jagannath, Gotri, Wye, Jukot, and Bichhiya are at risk of food insecurity.

III. THE RAPTI BHERI HILLS

Overall the food security situation in most of the Rapti Bheri Hills is better than during the same period last year (see Food Security Bulletin, No. 16). This can be attributed to an overall good summer crop yield. Nevertheless localized natural disasters have seriously impacted crop production in some areas of Dailekh, Jajarkot and Rukum.

In **Dailekh**, the status of household food security is deteriorating in the northeast of the district. Production of maize and paddy decreased by 40-60%, and 20-40% respectively due to excessive rainfall, flood, hailstorm, strong wind, and diseases. The total estimated number of people at risk to food insecurity is 25,000. Households most at risk include returned IDPs and those with a household member affected by HIV/AIDS (some 173 HIV/AIDS affected people have been identified by the DHO). Of the total of 556 IDP families from these affected VDCs, some 258 IDP families returned home during December 2007. Ensuring access to sufficient food has been reported as being extremely difficult for these returnee families. Out-migration is up from normal in these areas and approximately 80% of young men have left the area.

The central and northern **Jajarkot** is increasingly food insecure. As food prices are increasing, the outlook for many households in this part of the district is worrying. Currently eight VDCs in the north of the district have been classified with a warning for deteriorating food security, mainly due to losses of 20-40% in maize production due to late rainfall, strong wind, and pest infestation. Households are running out of food stocks, market prices of maize and rice have soared and are up to NRs 25 and 42 per kg, respectively, compared to NRs 15 and

32 per kg respectively during the same period last year (an increase of 67% and 31% respectively). Seasonal migration has increased significantly with about 10,000 people who have out-migrated to India or other destinations in Nepal. An estimated 40,000 people in Bhagawati, Ragda, Nayakbada, Rokayagaun, Paink, Daha, Kortang, and Majhkot are at risk of food insecurity.

A few areas in **Rukum**, Syalakhadi and Sisne VDCs are facing a deterioration in household food security as the maize production decreased by 20-40% in Sisne and the paddy crop was destroyed by hailstorm in Syalakhadi VDC. An estimated 2,700 people are at risk of food insecurity.

In **Surkhet**, the VDCs in the northern high hills and southern belt continue to be seasonally food insecure.

IV. THE WESTERN TERAI

Most of the districts in the Western Terai were affected by flood during July-August 2007. **Kailali**, **Baridya**, and **Banke** were among the most highly affected districts. These districts have now more or less recovered with the exception of extreme poor households which as reported in WFP's Emergency Update No.3 are still very much struggling to overcome the impact of the floods. The northern, hilly part of **Kailali**, and some areas bordering India in **Banke** and **Bardiya** are currently seasonally food insecure. The situation in **Kailali** and **Bardiya** is stable or is improving, however the situation in Gangapur and Holiya VDCs in **Banke** is likely to deteriorate further.

V. CENTRAL AND EASTERN TERAI AND MID HILLS

The extreme poor households in the worst flood affected areas such as **Parsa**, **Bara**, **Sarlahi**, **Mahottari**, **Dhanusha**, **Siraha**, and **Saptari** need further assistance to help them overcome the shock of last years flooding.

In **Chitwan**, the VDCs Kaule and Lothar and in **Makwanpur**, the VDCs Bharta and Dhiyal, have been classified as seasonally food insecure. These VDCs have high concentrations of indigenous people such as Bote, Chepang, and

Tamang who suffer from chronic food insecurity.

In **Udayapur**, Jogidaha, Hadiya, and Sundarpur VDCs continue to be seasonally food insecure. A warning for deteriorating household food security is issued for Chaudandi and Tapeswari VDCs. In these two VDCs an estimated 8,460 people (1,410 households) are at risk of food insecurity.

V. CENTRAL AND EASTERN HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

Generally the food security situation in most of the areas in central and eastern hill and mountain districts is good, mainly because of a good paddy, maize and millet harvest. Besides this, tourism, access to markets, and development activities have helped much to maintain a generally food secure situation.



Outlook for the winter crop production

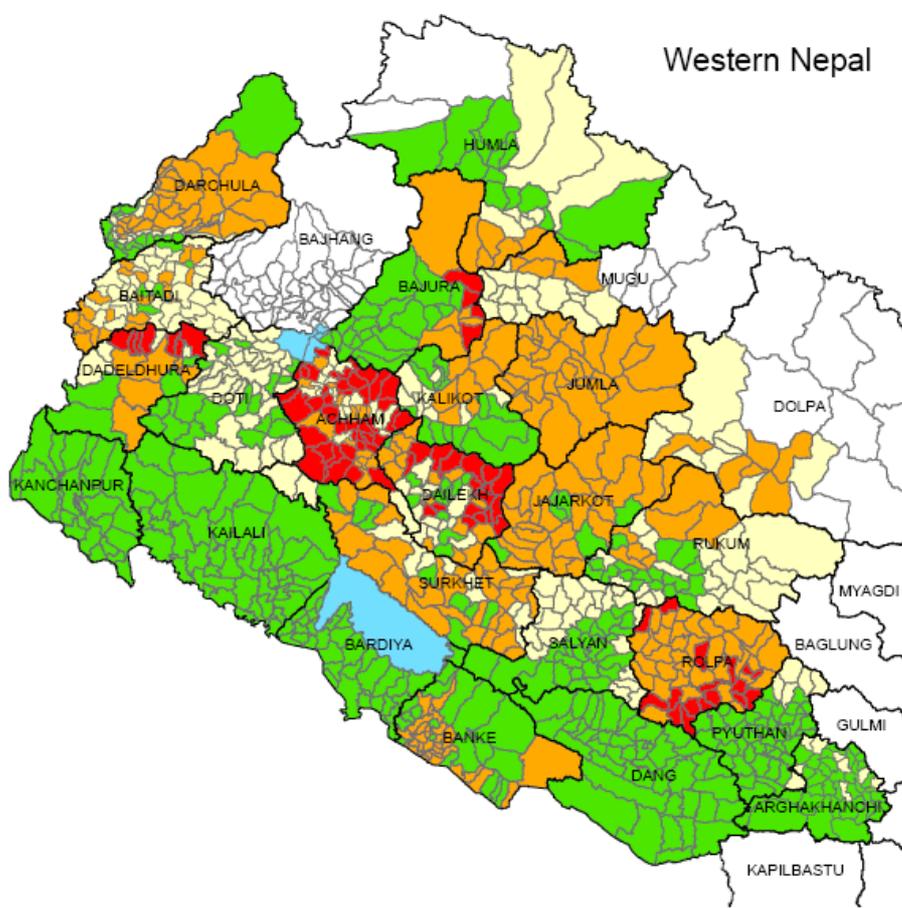
Wheat Crop Condition February 2008



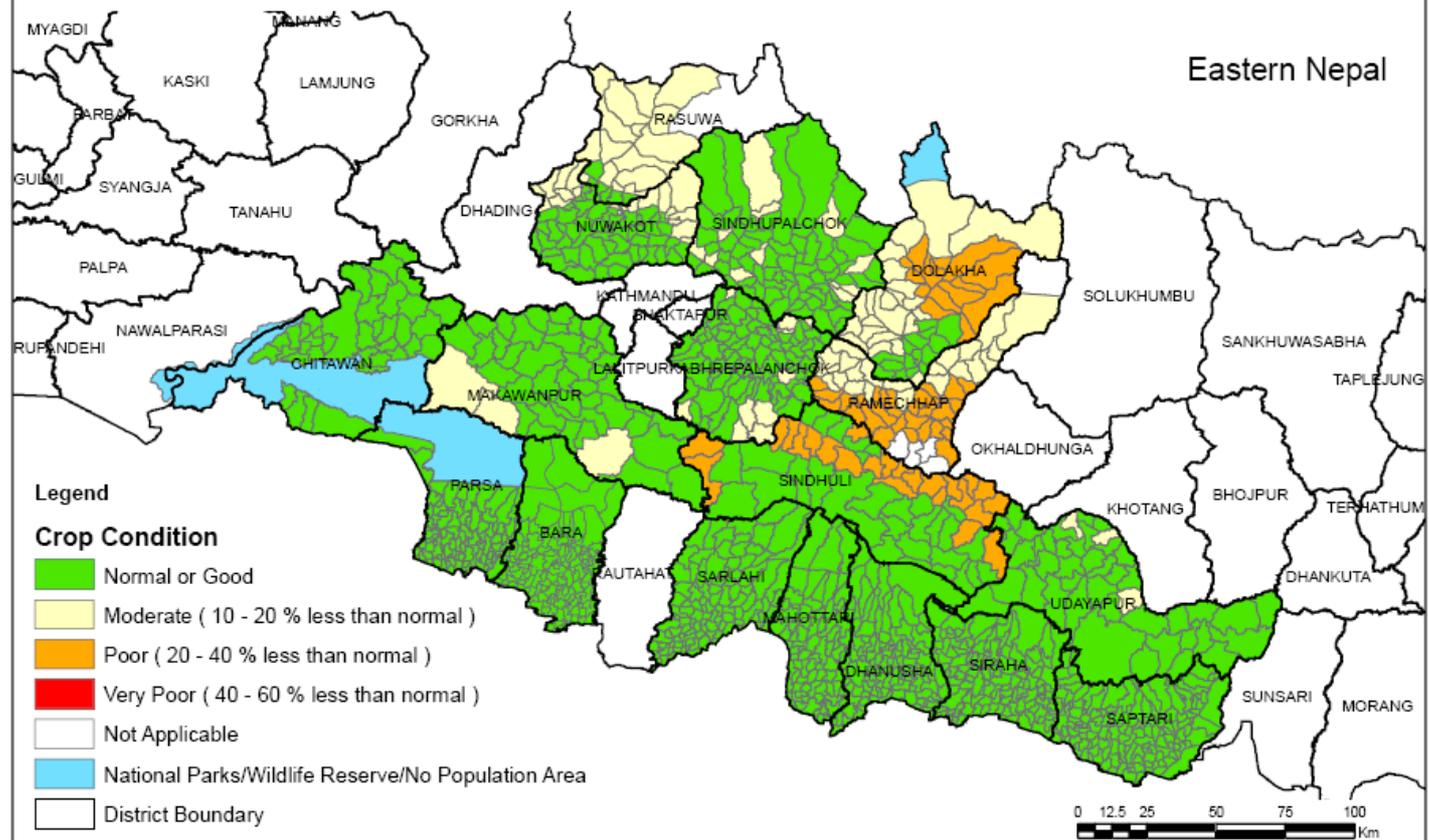
WHEAT OUTLOOK

Last year, the national wheat production increased by 8.68%. Much of this increase was due to higher yields in the Terai despite many areas in the Far- and Mid-West recording disappointing crop yields.

This year the situation is similar. The late and insufficient rainfall in the past couple of months has had a negative impact on the winter crops in the Far- and Mid-West. An early estimate indicates a decrease in wheat production by about 20-60% in many of these areas; the situation is likely to deteriorate further if there is no rain during the pre-harvesting month in March. In the Terai and the central and eastern region the wheat crop situation is expected to be normal, with few exceptions in some areas in Banke, Ramechhap, Dolakha, and northern part of Sindhuli district.



Western Nepal



Eastern Nepal

Legend

Crop Condition

- Normal or Good
- Moderate (10 - 20 % less than normal)
- Poor (20 - 40 % less than normal)
- Very Poor (40 - 60 % less than normal)
- Not Applicable
- National Parks/Wildlife Reserve/No Population Area
- District Boundary

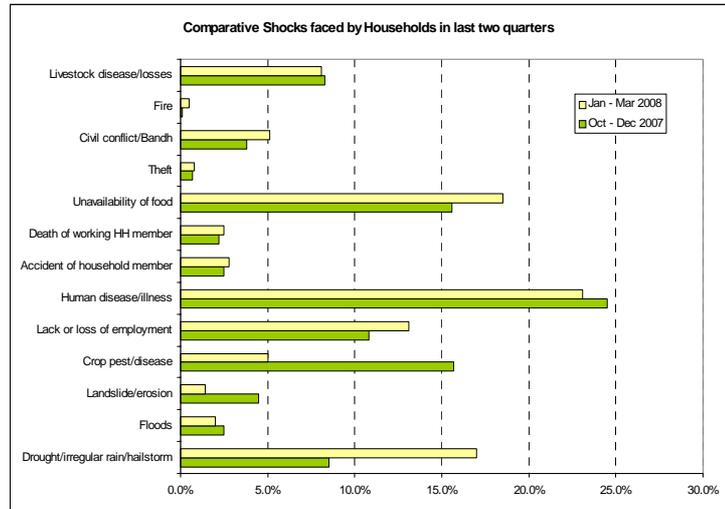




Household Food Security: Selected Indicators

VULNERABILITY

Graph 1 displays the three main problems faced by FSMAS surveyed households during the past two quarters. With the beginning of the lean period, availability of food has become a problem for more households (2.9% increase). Civil conflict or bandhs was also reported by 1.3% more households as being a main problem. Unemployment is up from 10.8% to 13.1% due to lack of opportunities. With no rain during January and February, 8.5% more households complained about drought and irregular rainfall with consequent effects on the upcoming wheat crop yields.

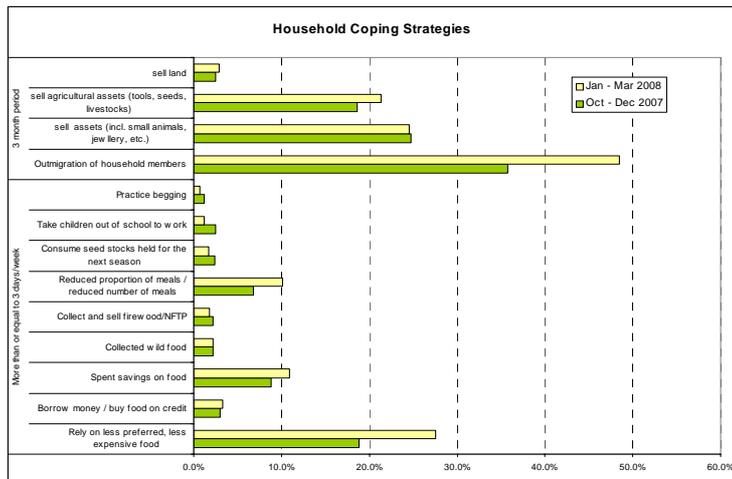


Graph 1 –Household shocks

HOUSEHOLD COPING STRATEGIES

A similar comparison was made for current use of household coping strategies. With access to food becoming more of a problem, reliance on less preferred food, reduction in the number or proportion of meals and using savings or credit for the purchase of food are on the increase (see Graph 2).

Severe coping strategies have also been utilized by more households. Sales of agricultural assets by households has increased by 2.7% compared to last quarter. The number of households with one member working elsewhere increased from 35.8% to 48.5% (see Graph 2).



Graph 2 –Coping strategies



Food Security Phase Classification

Phase classification		Alert Level Definitions and Reference Characteristics	
1. Food Secure	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no indications of global food security problems. Poverty levels are low/moderate. • Crop situation is favourable/normal. • There has been sufficient rainfall. • There are sufficient food commodities in the markets. • Households have sufficient food stocks to last until the next harvest. • Markets are functioning and are accessible. • Prices of main staples are stable. • The employment situation is normal. • No excessive in or out migration patterns. • Incidence of wasting is very low. • No major diarrhea outbreaks / or epidemics. • No natural disasters. • General peaceful situation – no enduring bandhs / roadblocks. • No unsustainable coping strategies employed by households. 	
2. Seasonally food insecure (Chronic)	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area is experiencing seasonal food insecurity during the normal lean periods. Poverty levels are high. • Crop harvests are low to normal. However, current crop is not sufficient to feed the population until next harvest. • Rainfall has been intermittent but acceptable. • The markets are functioning and accessible but are less well stocked. • Households have insufficient food stocks to last until next harvest, but this is generally considered as normal. • Prices of main staples are higher than normal. • There are limited employment opportunities during this time of the year. • Out-migration is increasing. • Incidence of wasting is low. • Indication of diarrhea outbreaks / or epidemics. • Occurrence of natural disaster with resulting crop, stock and asset losses. • General peaceful situation. Bandhs and roadblocks may cause additional hardship. • Indications of intensified HH coping behaviour (asset selling, borrowing, migration etc) 	
3. Warning of deteriorating food insecurity	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The food security situation is deteriorating in the area; food shortages are much more than acceptable/normal for the time of the year. Poverty levels are high. • Crop harvests are low. More than 50% of the crop is lost. • Rainfall has been insufficient/late/non-existent for consecutive years. • Markets are non-existent due to no or limited supply. • Households have depleted or very low food stocks. • Prices of main staples are increasing rapidly and are unstable. • There are very limited employment opportunities during this time of the year. • Levels of out-migration are high. • Incidence of wasting is moderate to high. • Evidence of malnutrition in women and children is easily observable. • Indication of severe diarrhea outbreaks / or epidemics. • Occurrence of large impact natural disaster with resulting crop, stock and asset losses. • Limited conflict situation with increasing civil security incidences. • HHs adopt irreversible coping behaviour (productive asset selling -tools, seeds, land-, large amounts of borrowing, etc). 	
4. Acute food and livelihood crisis	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's an acute food crisis in the area. Extreme food shortages occur. Poverty levels are very high. • Crop harvests are very low or have been lost. More than 80-100% of the crop is lost. • Rainfall has been insufficient/late/non-existent for several consecutive years. • Markets are non-existent due to no food supply. • Households have depleted their food stocks. • Prices of main staples are very high and unaffordable for a large portion of the population. • No employment opportunities. • People are out-migrating due to food scarcity. • Incidence of wasting is high. Underweight levels of children are above 75%. • Evidence of malnutrition in women and children is widespread. • Occurrence of severe diarrhea or epidemic outbreaks. • Occurrence of large scale impact natural disaster with resulting crop, stock and asset losses. • Extended conflict situation – no agricultural activities possible. • HH adopt crisis coping strategies (productive asset selling -tools, seeds, land-, large amounts of borrowing, etc). 	

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