THE GAMBIA

mVAM Food Security and Market Bulletin #2, August 2020

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND MARKET PRICES

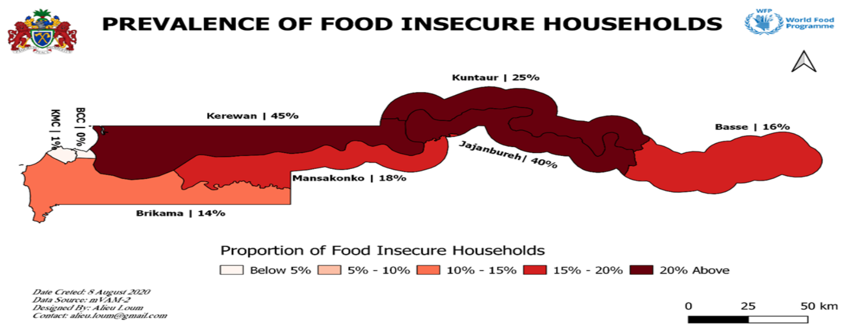
Highlights:

The Gambia Government continued with remote monitoring of household food security and market prices in the 8 regions of the country in the context of new lockdown measures as COVID-19 cases spike.

There has been stability in the food security situation, with growing trends of households showing improved food consumption patterns. Proportions of families with poor food consumption, increased to 22 percent from 20 percent since July 2020. However, some pockets of the country –North Bank and Central River Regions-have high vulnerability to food insecurity.

Prices of key staple foods are also continued to be stable. This is likely because of the Government national food distributions combined with WFP and other partners responses to the COVID-19.

Fig. 1: **Households Dietary Diversity Scores**



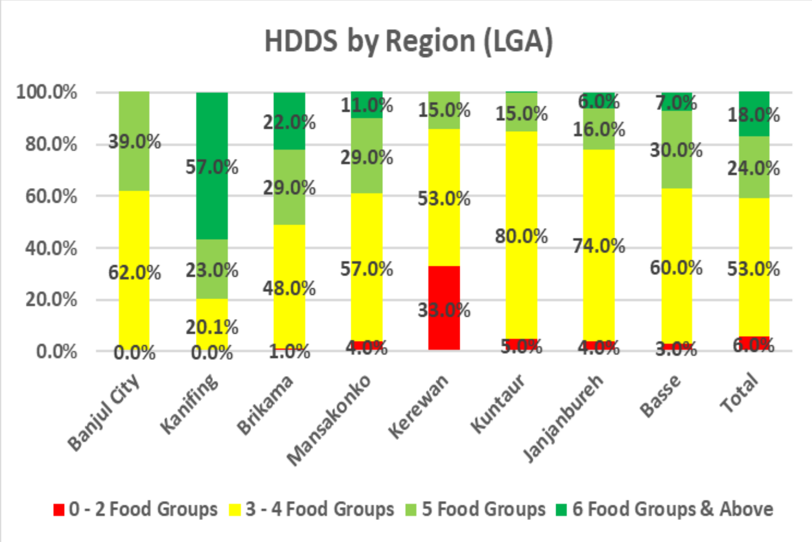
Situation update

The Gambia Government reintroduced COVID-19 containment measures such as closing non-food shops, putting restrictions on public gatherings and curfews from 10pm to 5am and lumos remained close. In general, these public health measures and restrictions have slowed down and delayed the flow and distribution of imported foods, cross border trade and domestic supply chains, severely disrupting markets in the country.

The food security situation remains generally stable across the country, however vulnerability to food insecurity is on the increase in especially in rural Gambia. Kerewan in North Bank Region, Kuntaur in Central River Region North and Janjanbureh in Central River Region South all have food insecure households of more than the national average. The situation has deteriorated more in the North Bank Region where about 30 percent of households' consumption is poor and about 33 percent of the households consumed 0—2 food groups.

At national level the prevalence of food insecurity stands at 22 percent, of which 16 percent of the population is moderately food insecure and 5.6 percent severely food insecure. This translates to 137,527 people with high vulnerability to food insecurity and 397,847 people with moderate vulnerability. The two categories of national prevalence of food insecurity combined yield results indicating more than half million (535,374) of the population under food insecurity

Fig. 2: **Households Dietary Diversity Scores**



Food Consumption by Gender and Household size

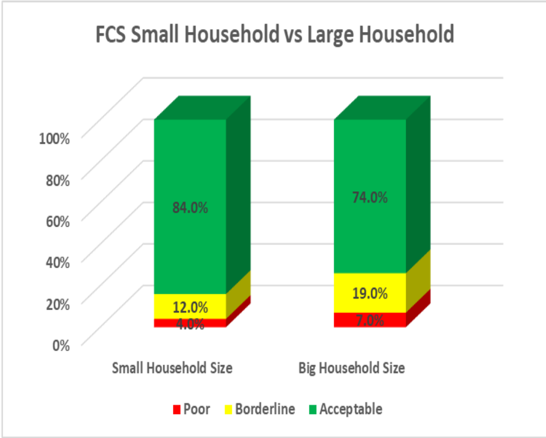
The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency, and relative nutritional importance of different food groups. Respondents were asked about the food consumption of their household in the past seven days.

Small households (1-10) had a better food consumption (84%) than large households (with>10 members) (74%). This shows the food security situation in large households is deteriorating compare to July (19%). This implies that large households are more vulnerable to food insecurity especially in the context of the COVID-19 as shown in **Fig.3**

Male headed household's food consumption has dropped from (80%) in July to (77%). Male headed households have poor food consumption (23%) higher than the national average. Female headed households had a better food consumption (86%) than male headed, and poor food consumption (14%) less than the national average. This may be as a result of they are more productive or received more assistance that gave them an edge over male headed households in terms of purchasing power. Shown in **Fig 4**

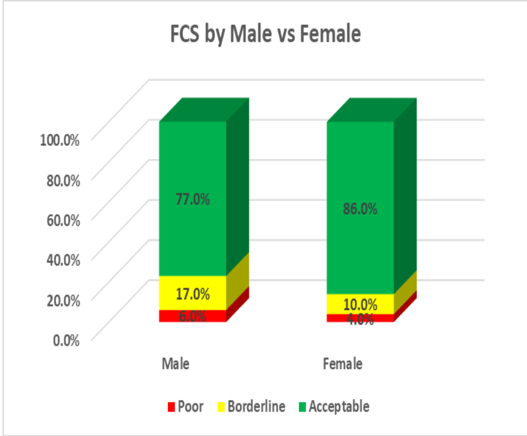
Overall**,** the poor and borderline consumption translates to **46,416 people** with high vulnerability to food insecurity and **311,466** with moderate vulnerability, respectively.

Fig. 3: FCS Small households vs Large households



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

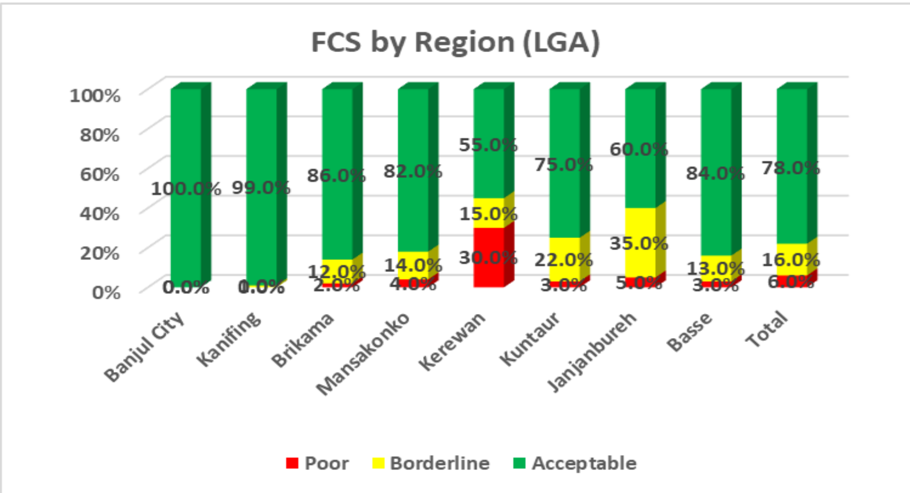
Fig. 4: FCS by Gender



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Food Consumption Score by Region

Fig. 5: FCS by Region (LGA)



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

At national level, food consumption is stable, however there are pockets across the regions with poor food consumption. Proportions of families with poor food consumption, has risen from 20 percent reported in July to 22 percent.

Kerewan — North Bank Region (NBR) has the high percentage of poor food consumption with 45 percent, an increase from 37 percent in July. Janjanbureh—Central River Region South (CRRS) has the second highest with an increase from 30 percent in July to 40 percent.

Banjul and Kanifing Municipal Councils have the highest acceptable food consumption score (97%); this could be due to the good coverage of COVID-19 relief responses. Brikama—West Coast Region (WCR) also had 87 percent of the households reporting acceptable food consumption. Being the most populated region, WCR also received a lot of COVID-19 relief responses. For Banjul, it could also be the small sample size and for Kerewan and Mansakonko low respond rate that creates a bias in the data.

In general, household consumption has slightly dropped to 78 percent from 80 percent in July. This shows household's food stocks are gradually depleting as we progress into the lean season but also as result of the COVID-19. However, those with good consumption may be largely due to the food and/or cash assistance to communities by government, NGOs, institutions and philanthropist.

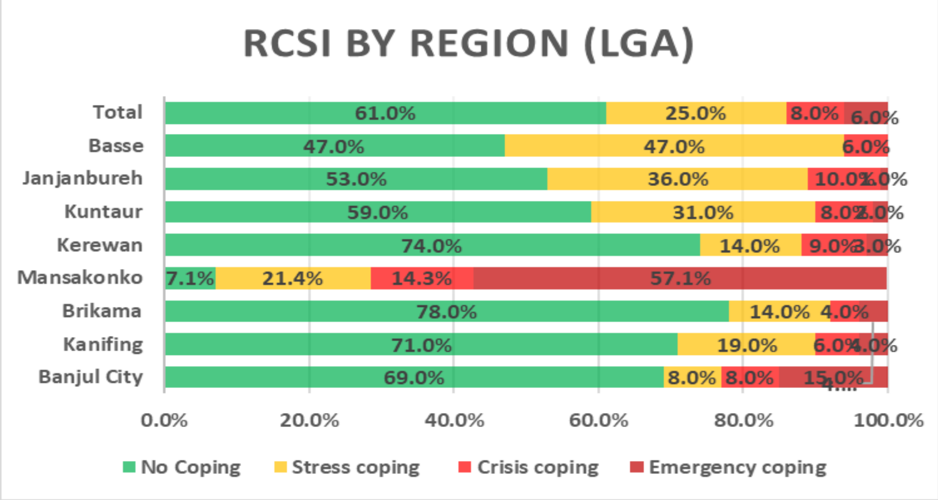
Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)

Reduced Coping Strategies refer to strategies that households adopt when they cannot access food in sufficient quantity and quality. Among these strategies, the most common are buying low quality and cheaper food, reducing food portions, reducing the consumption of certain members of the household for the benefit of children, reducing the number of meals per day and borrowing food or food aid.

The findings revealed that at national level about 25 percent are adopting stress coping strategies, 8 percent crisis coping strategies and 6 percent emergency coping strategies. Overall, about 39 percent of the households reported resorting to at least one survival strategy in the past 7 days and 61 percent adopted no coping strategy.

In Brikama LGA, more than three quarter of the households faced no shocks that could trigger them to reduce their family's consumption of food. Similarly, Kerewan, Kanifing and Kuntaur had 74, 71 and 59 percent of the households respectively not adopting negative coping strategies. Mansakonko LGA had more than half (57%) of the household populations adopting emergency coping strategies such as consumption of less preferred and less expensive food; borrowing of food; reduction of portion size; restriction of adults' consumption in favor of children; and reduction in the number of meals per day in order to offset shocks. Figure 6 provides the detailed statistics by region.

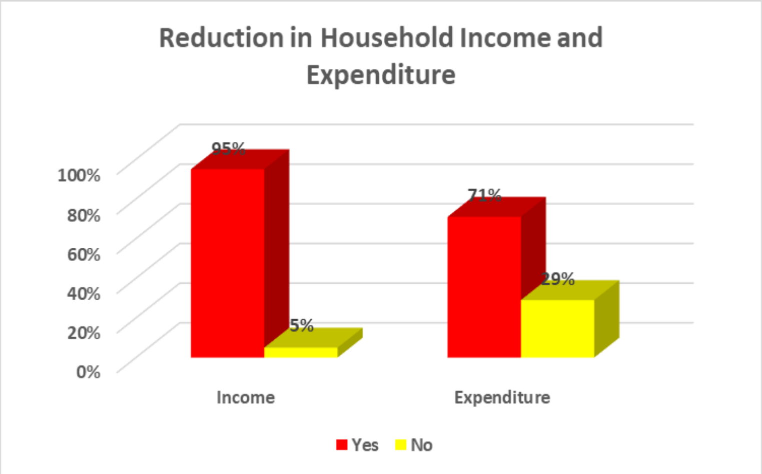
Fig. 6: Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Income and Expenditure

Fig. 7: Income and Expenditure



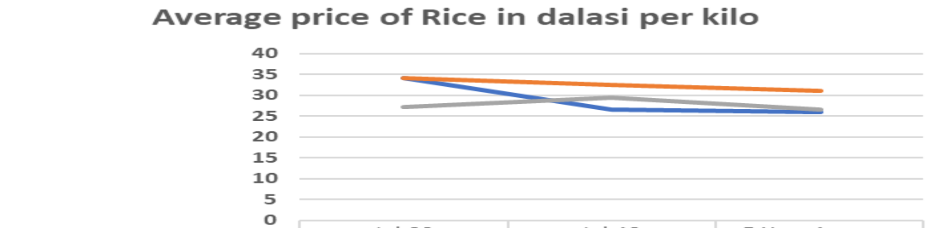
Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

COVID-19 containment measures have had detrimental impact on economic activities. Many households are experiencing a huge reduction in income as a result of the COVID-19. There has been a slight increase in the number of households that experience reduction in income from 93 percent in July to 95 percent and majority of them cited low production due to social isolation, loss of jobs, closure of markets including lumos (weekly open markets), drop in sales, seizure of remittance both home and abroad, loss of perishable crops and reduction of passengers on public transport as the main cause. In the Gambia, majority live from hand to mouth either through petty trading at lumos and regular markets, taxi driving, selling at the Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) all of which were affected by the COVID-19 restrictions measures. According to the preharvest assessment report about 20 percent of the population in rural Gambia rely on remittance for food.

COVID-19 has had a big impact on the purchasing power of people. Given a reduction in income and increase in expenditure, households' disposable income fall which lowered the purchasing power of most households. There has been a rise also in the percentage of households' experiencing increase in household expenditure as a result of the COVID-19 from 67 percent in July to 71 percent, citing panic buying, hoarding of commodities by shopkeepers, closure of schools resulting in the increase of food expenditure costs, high costs of transportation due to the restriction of passengers on public transport. The closure of schools due to the pandemic was an extra burden on some parents as have extra people to feed. Fares were increased by taxi drivers due to reduction in number of passengers to carry. Fig. 7 shows trends in household income and expenditure.

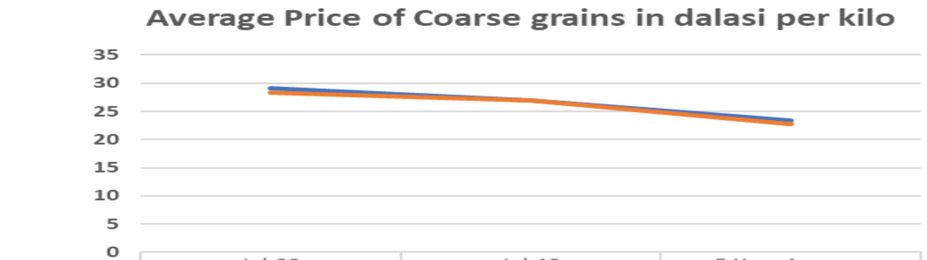
Market Prices

Graph1: Price of Rice



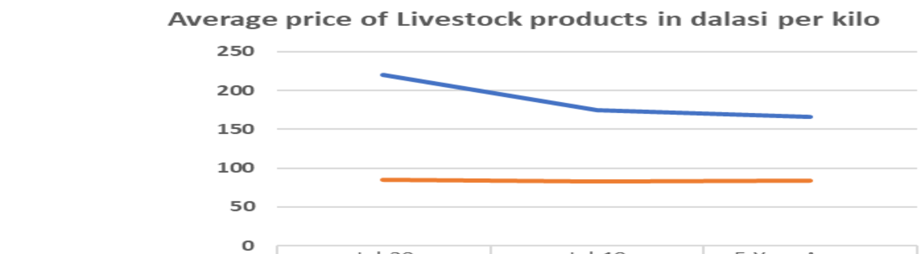
	Jul-20	Jul-19	5-Year Average
Paddy long grain local	34.13	26.57	25.9
Long grain imported	34.13	32.57	31.11
Small grain imported	27.19	29.43	26.66

Graph2: Price of coarse grains



	Jul-20	Jul-19	5-Year Average
Maize	29.07	26.88	23.44
Millet	28.34	26.88	22.72

Graph3: Price of livestock products



	Jul-20	Jul-19	5-Year Average
Meat (Beef)	220	175	166.38
Chicken (Imported)	84.57	83	83.28

- Generally market prices for the staple food are stable, which may be not only because of demand and supple but also government intervention in fixing the prices and food assistance. Lumos (open weekly markets) remain closed, while regular markets are open but with restrictions and supplies are going down which is slowly having negative impact on prices. The increase in prices will in the long run decrease households' disposable income and purchasing power of the households. This coupled with the impact of COVID-19 has made it difficult for families to cope with the rising cost of living and access to markets

- The average prices per kilo for each of the 3 categories of rice (local, long grain and small grain) the staple food of The Gambia remains relatively stable at pre COVID-19 prices. The price for Long grain rice has slight increased compared to last month, 5 percent compared to last year and 10 percent compared to five-year average. The price for paddy long grain local rice has no significant difference compared to last month however, 28 percent and 32 percent higher compared to last year and five-year average respectively.

- The price for coarse grains maize and millet the main cereals in The Gambia is equally stable not much difference compared to last month. The price for is 8 percent higher compared to last year and 24 percent compared to five-year average. There is a similar trend in millet 5 percent higher compared to last year and 25 percent higher compared to five-year average.

- There is not much significant change for livestock products too, meat (beef) and chicken. The price of chicken per kilo is between D75 –D85 while meat (beef) is around D220 per kilo. Mutton and lam are more expensive however majority of Gambians buy chicken and meat (beef). Furthermore the price of chicken might go up if the COVID-19 restriction remain as markets will get out of stock.

- The prices of onion and potato (Irish) per kilo remain stable but higher compared to last month. The price for both onion and potato is 9 percent higher compared to last month, and onion is 6 percent higher compare to five-year average. The increase in the price of onion and potato could be due shortage in the market as a result of the border closure.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Covid-19 is having a negative impact of Covid-19 on food security, the stable food consumption is due to the food distributions by governments, NGOs, institutions, individuals as well as Covid-19 responses by UN Agencies and other development partners. The urban areas are showing high food insecurity vulnerability. **Fig.8** presents major concerns reported by the respondents.

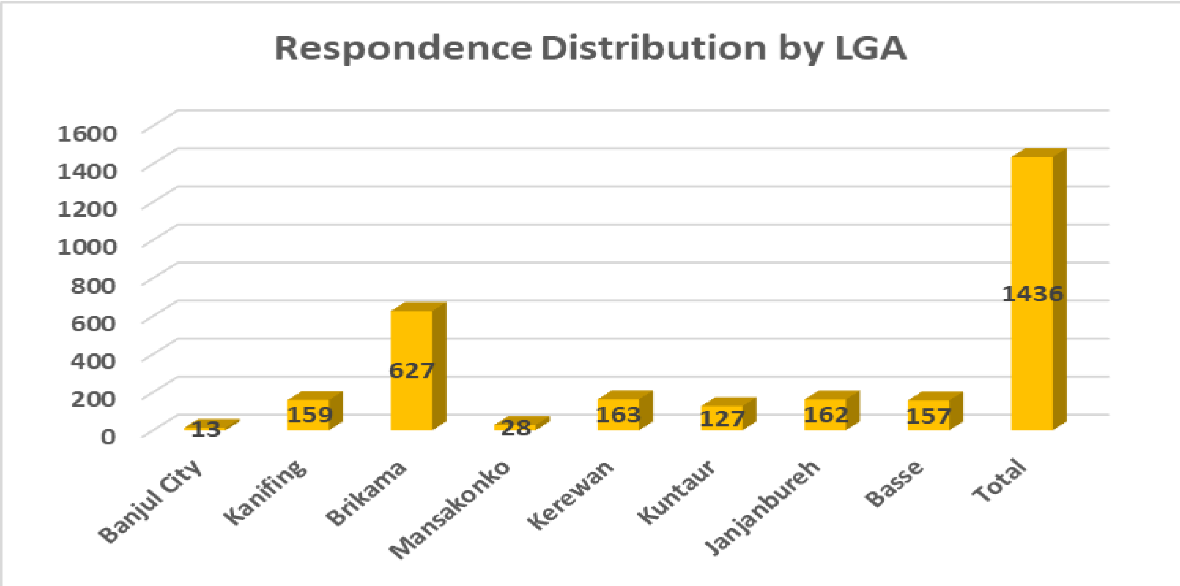
Fig.8: Major concerns raise

Recommendations

- There is need for continued humanitarian assistance throughout the lean season.
- Food security and market price monitoring to be continued.
- There is need to understand the impact of Covid-19 on nutrition.
- There should an incentive for mVAM respondents (D50 mobile credit) as number of respondents are dropping

Sample profile

Fig. 9: Sample



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020

Sample profile

In the second round of the mVAM data collection for food security and market price from the same sample 1,840 households selected anonymously among the 10,000 contacts in the GBoS database. Out of a total of 3,251 EAs in the 6 LGAs and 2 councils, five percent (163 EAs) was sampled with 5 households to be interviewed per sampled EA. This translates to 1,840 households from the sampled enumeration areas out of which 1436 (78 percent) actually responded.

The survey has a national coverage with 81 percent of the respondents males and 19 percent females; while 86% are male headed while 14 percent are female heads of their households. The male domination could be attributed to cultural and religious norms. Over one third of household heads have no formal education (35 percent), about 33 percent conventional school, 32 percent madarassa education.

Sample profile

The respondent rate has dropped compared to the first round of the survey 91 percent, with all regions above 60 percent except Mansakonko LGA. However, in round two the respondent rate has gone down in all the regions between to 5 - 29 percent which can affect the results in those regions in particular and the national figures in general.

The analysis for Kerewan and Banjul may be bias due to a serious dropped in respondence rate 29 percent and 20 percent respectively and while Mansakonko LGA's respondent rate is below 30 percent which is not representative. This have seriously affected the mVAM results.

Kuntaur LGA Central River Region North and Janjanbureh LGA Central River Region South has the highest response rate 106 percent and 108 percent respectively. However, respond rates are poor in Mansakonko LGA Lower River Region and not very good in Kerewan LGA 67 percent North Bank Region and Basse LGA 57 percent Upper River Region.

Methodology

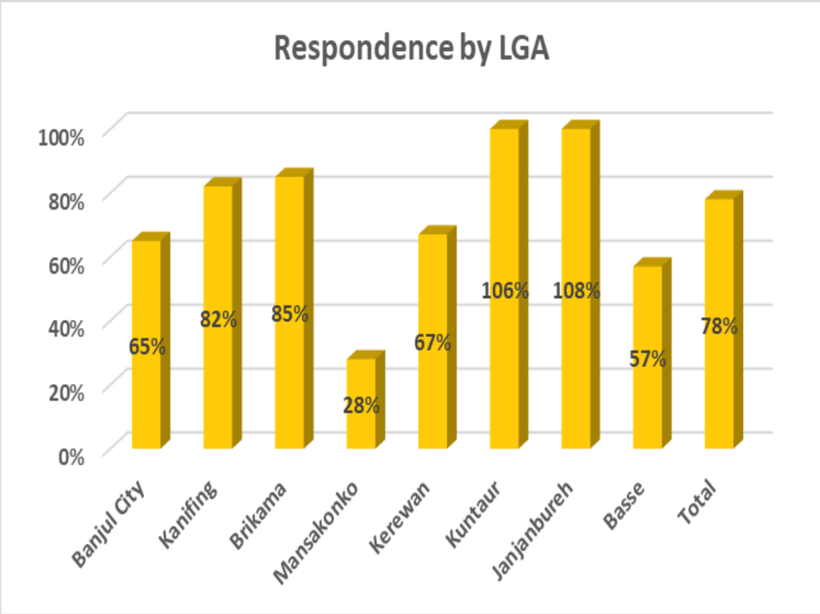
This is the second round of the mVAM survey and data was collected from the same sample households through mobile calls to the sampled households and selected traders located in selected markets. In order to ensure better representativeness of the sample the mVAM survey covered countrywide. Data was collected from 1436 households out of targeted 1840 and 11 regular markets across the country since the weekly markets are closed.

Eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) and municipalities; namely Brikama, Kerewan, Mansa Konko, Kuntaur, Jangjangbureh and Basseand KMC and BCC were targeted. The sample respondents for the food and nutrition intake enumeration was obtained from the sample frame of GBOS Economic Survey telephone list of household respondents.

Data is collected bi-weekly for a duration of 4 days from 1840 households and 2 days for market prices from 11 regular markets Data was collected using tablets through telephone interview and uploaded onto ONA platform for further analysis.

WFP Gambia is providing support to the Ministry of Agriculture through the Planning Services Unit to roll out the remote data collection to ensure continued monitoring of the food security situation of households and market prices in the Gambia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fig.10: Respondence Rate by LGA



Source: The Gambia mVAM, August 2020)

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mVAM Resources:

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Blog: mvam.org

Toolkit: http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM

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