



Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

DECEMBER 2022

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in December 2022, based on remote household food security surveys conducted in early December 2022.



Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



One in ten households are currently food insecure



12%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)¹

 Food Security situation has improved in six months



48%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
*Livelihood-based coping strategies*²



25% purchased food on credit



20% had debts



16% spent their savings

Food security varies across the population



26%

of low-income households were moderately food insecure, and 10% of these households had no iron-rich food intake.



72%

of the households are worried about food prices, with a significant increase in the majority of the food commodities compared to last year.

1. Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI). The remote comprehensive food security index (rCARI) is an aggregated food security index used to report on a population's comprehensive food security. The indicators used to calculate this are: (i) food consumption scores, (ii) livelihood coping mechanisms, (iii) income sources, and (iv) income changes due to the shock .
2. The Livelihood Coping Strategies Index (LCSI) builds on the understanding of the behaviours vulnerable households engage in to meet their immediate food security needs in times of crisis or shock.





In Brief

Food security situation improved over the last six months. One in ten households is moderately food insecure, which is an improvement compared to the survey results over the last six months. In a continuing global food crisis, high national inflation rates, and high food prices for several key commodities, comparatively less households reported relying on coping all over the country. Approximately 48 percent reported resorting to livelihood-based coping, which was 63 percent in November. Returning to less reliance on coping was mostly due to increased livelihood opportunities for seasonal rice and vegetable cultivation and harvest.

Food security varied spatially, temporally, and by income. Despite improvement over time, households in Sylhet and Chittagong were recovering slowly. They had the highest food insecurity due to seasonal livelihood impacts, losses, and damages from floods, cyclones, etc. The low-income households experienced the highest hardship in putting food on the table, which varied across divisions. Approximately 40 percent of low-income households in Chittagong were moderately food insecure.

The survey revealed that 26 percent were food insecure in low-income households, compared to 6 percent in medium-income households and less than 1 percent in high-income households.

High food prices remained the most significant and constant worry. Some 72 percent of households said the rise in food prices was their deepest concern. In comparison, 27 percent of households mentioned the second highest concern was health expenditure increase, and 19 percent mentioned the burden of debt or loans to cope with food insecurity. Most of the major food commodity prices kept rising.

Households continued relying on coping strategies to keep food on the table. Around three in ten households applied livelihood-based coping strategies such as borrowing money, selling productive assets, or going into debt to buy food. However, the percentage is much less than in the previous months. Households continued relying both on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies. Some 51 percent of low-income households applied food-based coping, the highest among different income groups.

A little less than half of the households are using coping strategies



48%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES*



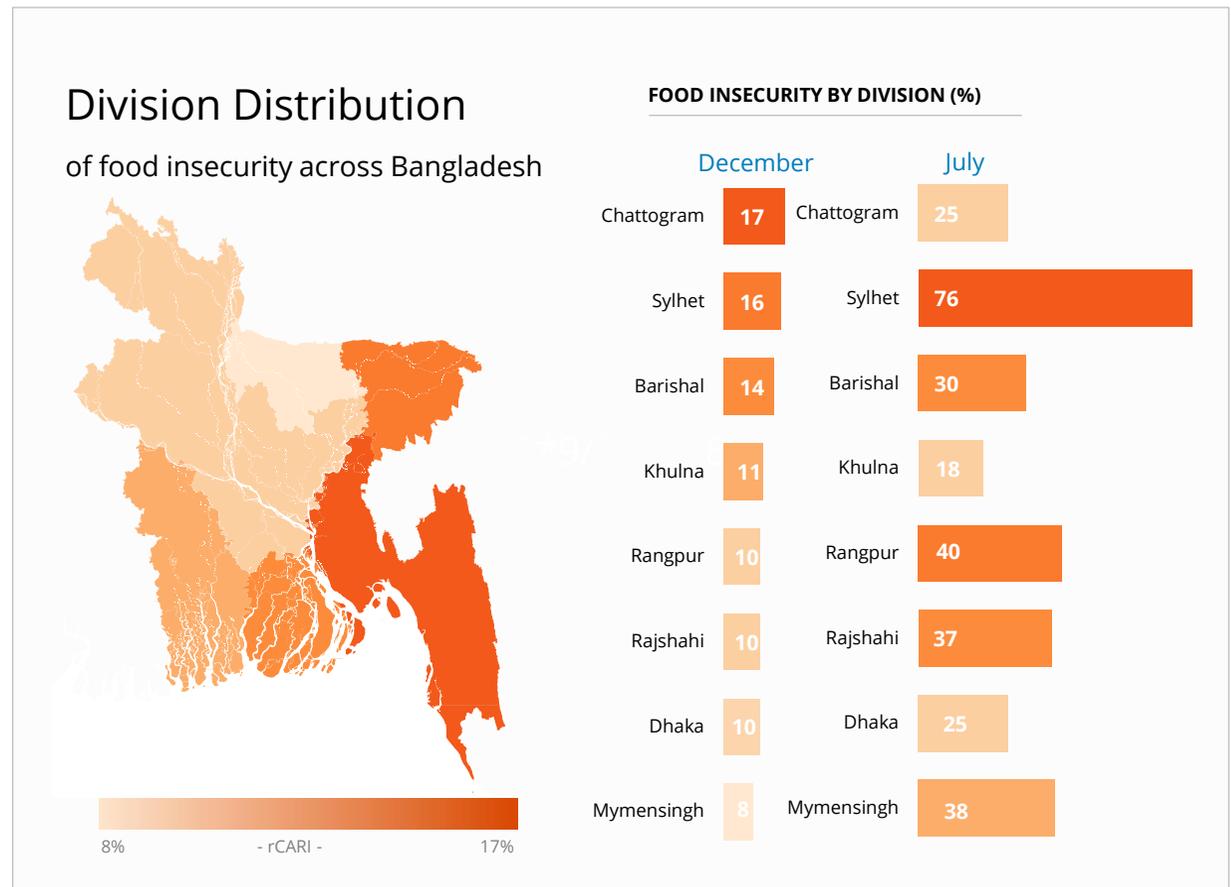
12%

FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)

Findings

More than one in ten households surveyed (12%) were food insecure. All these households were at moderate levels of food insecurity, and there were no severely food insecure households in December. Early harvest of Aman rice, followed by the cultivation of subsequent winter crops on the same land, created jobs for agricultural labourers.

However, there was variation across divisions and months. On average, households in almost all the divisions showed high progress compared to the base month of July. A significant improvement was observed, dropping to 12 percent from 29 percent over the last six months, with no households reporting severe food insecurity. It was due to revived job opportunities due to seasonal harvest and crop cultivation, construction jobs to repair damaged households, cleaning work of debris due to flood water, reopening brick fields, etc. Among the divisions, Sylhet was the hardest hit due to frequent devastating floods and improved drastically compared to other divisions; almost 75 percent of households were moderately food insecure, including 1 percent suffering severe food insecurity in July. Compared to other divisions, proportionately, households surveyed in Chittagong reported a slow recovery.

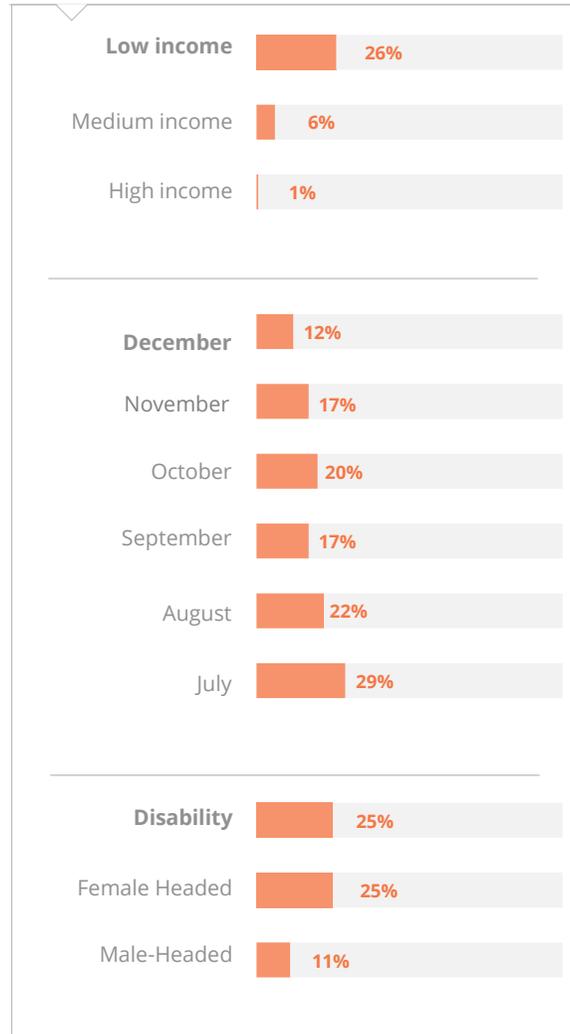


There is a large gap among the different segments of population.

Low-income households were the most vulnerable. Low-income Households relying on informal sources, such as petty traders, skilled and non-skilled labourers, and most importantly, agricultural labourers were more likely to be food insecure (26% on average) on the sixth row since the survey started in July. This is mainly because they rely on seasonal job opportunities. The situation improved in December as the lean season was over with some early harvest and cultivation of winter vegetable crops. On the other side, high-income households with fixed monthly incomes, large agricultural farms, or businesses were stable. They reported being food secure throughout the survey from July to December amidst high prices and global food crises.

Female-headed households and households with disability were more food insecure than households without. The percentage of female-headed households was more than double that of male-headed households. Female-headed households experienced difficulties putting food on the table due to less skill and readiness to work, unavailability of time after caregiving the kids, social stigma, safety concerns, etc. The proportion is similar to households with disability. In Bangladesh, disabled people are more disadvantaged, having fewer opportunities to earn a living. Moreover, households with disabled people reported being overburdened with medical expenses and income loss of other earning members due to caregiving time at home.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)

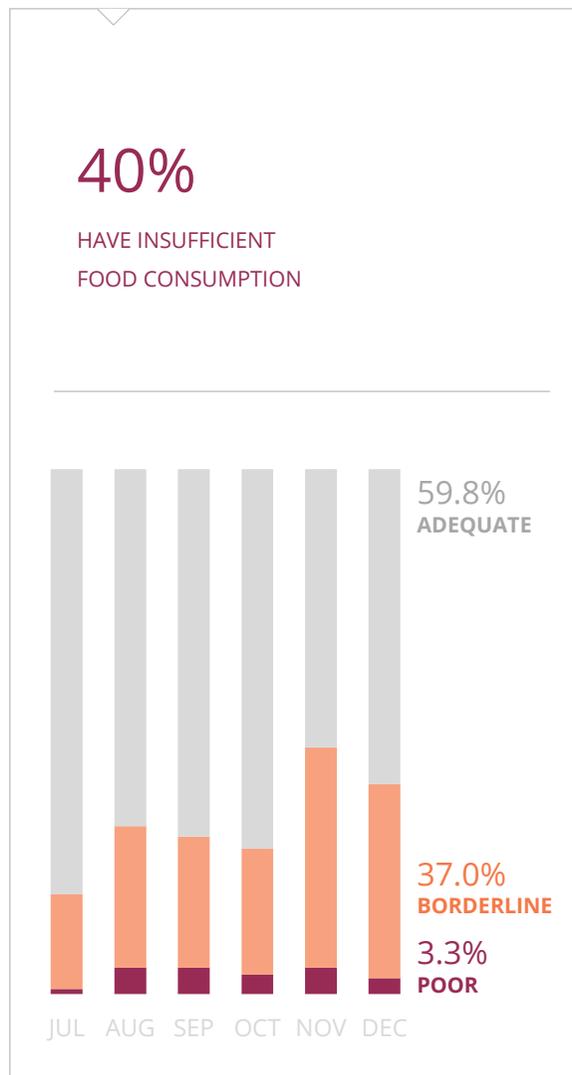


Four in ten households were not consuming adequate diets.

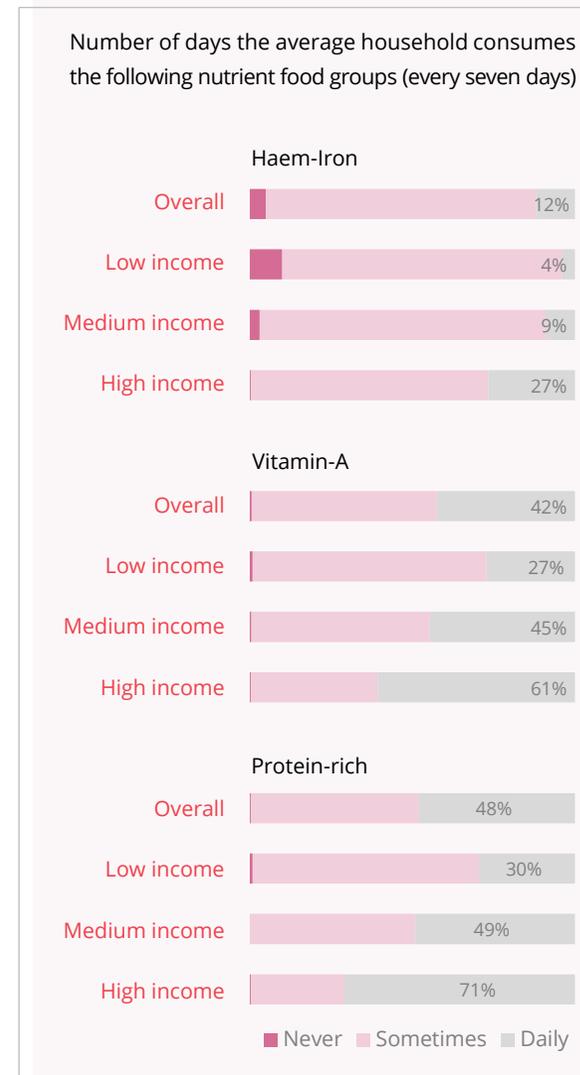
High food prices have a crippling impact on the household's food consumption, as only 18 percent reported having their own source of some portion of their food production. The rest (81%) entirely depended on buying food from the market. In December, an average of 60 percent of households in eight divisions had an acceptable diet, which is 7 percent higher than in November. In seven days, average households ate protein and vegetables less than five days and reported having fruits and dairy less than two days. Most households reported buying small quantities of food than before.

Households with disability were eating less diverse diets – more than half (54 percent) were facing insufficient food consumption, compared to four in ten households (40 percent) on average, and 60 percent of low-income households reported having members with disability. **The consumption of micronutrient-rich food is also alarmingly low, especially iron-rich food and low-income households.** Only 12 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 83 percent had it sometimes, and 5 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates in the last seven days. Low-income households barely afford to put nutritious food on their plate. Approximately four in ten households had an acceptable diet in this group, compromising the quality and quantity of food.

FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



OCTOBER FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION



* The "Food consumption score" (FCS) is a score calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the 7 days before the survey. There are standard weights for each of the food groups that comprise the food consumption score.

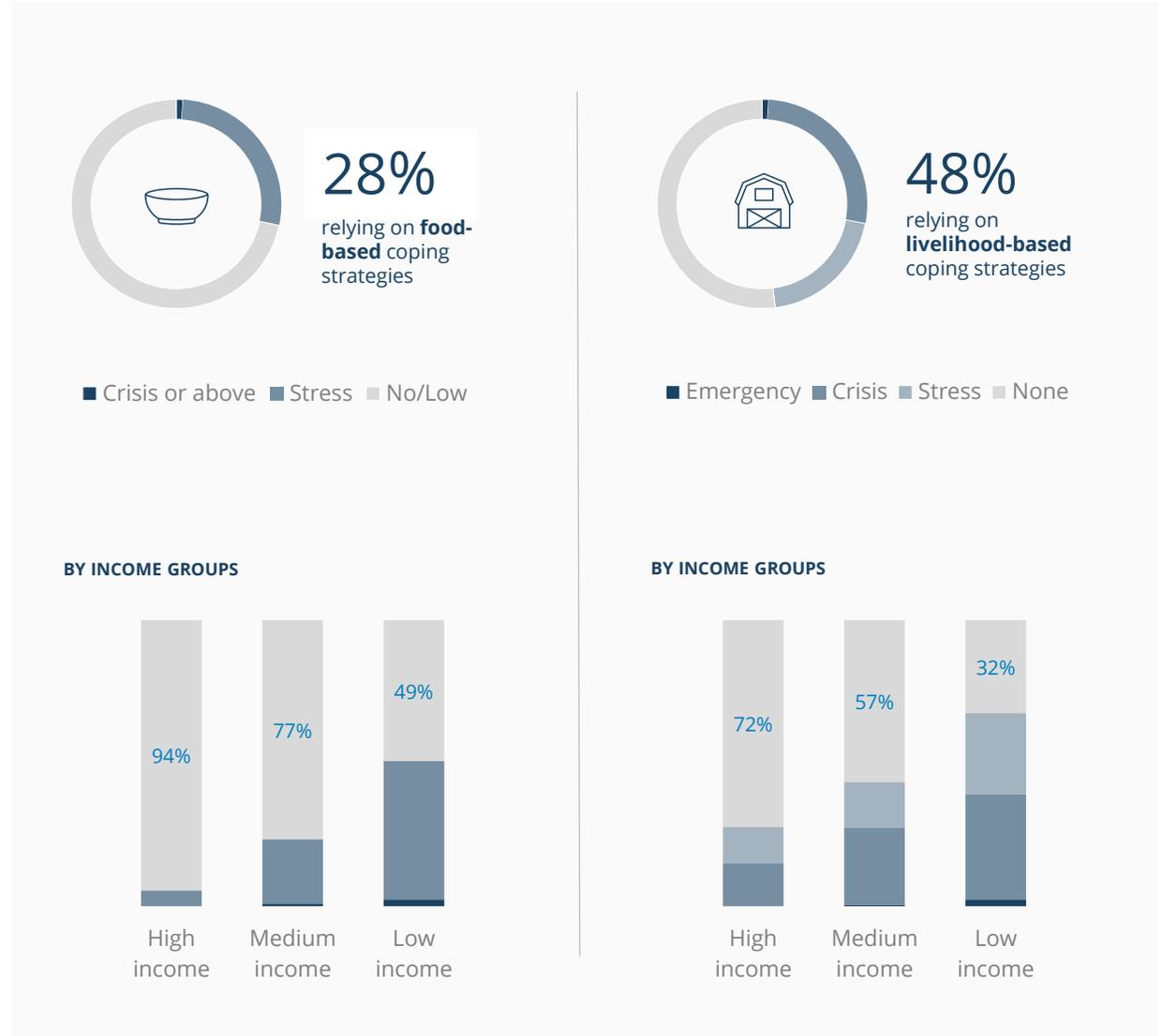
Portions of households adopting coping strategies had decreased.

Approximately three in ten households were relying on food-based coping strategies such as relying on less preferred food, limiting portion sizes, or sacrificing the meals of adults so that children can eat. Reliance on negative coping strategies had decreased since agricultural and non-agricultural activities resumed after the lean season and some recovery from disaster impacts.

Coping strategy use varies across income groups. It was evident from the survey rounds since July that low-income groups were most prone to be non-resilient to shocks, be it price, disaster, or others. They dribble in the vicious cycle of poverty as long-term reliance on non-reversible coping strategies coupled with low or no income and price hikes made the households more vulnerable to future shocks.

Income instability made a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.

Low-income households were turning to more food-based (51%) and livelihood-based (68%) coping strategies to meet food and basic needs for their well-being compared to other households, even after the lean season. A cascaded impact on the income group was very clear over the months. High-income groups performed better amidst high food prices over the last couple of months. Medium income group was way better than the low-income group. They slowly recovered from debts and income losses.



* Reduced food-based coping strategies (rCSI) scores are used as a proxy variable for food insecurity. The rCSI is based on the frequency and severity of coping mechanisms for households reporting food consumption problems and assesses the stress level of households due to a food shortage. A high score indicates a higher stress level, and a lower score means that the household is less stressed.



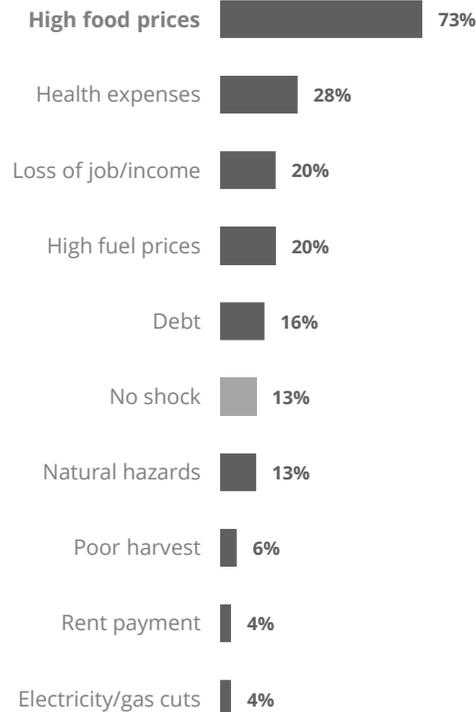
High food prices affected the most households

Over seven in ten households have been hit by high food prices in the last six months. This shock comes as prices for key commodities spiked over a year from 2021, especially after the global food crises. The major food commodities are rice, wheat, soybean oil, sugar, eggs, potatoes, and red lentils, major food items of regular diet in the country at all levels of income group. The global export import crisis impacted the wheat price to rise by 67 percent yearly. The non-food inflation rate had also hit the highest since July, which was 9.98 percent¹ in November². The next most reported shocks were health expenditures and loss of income or employment.



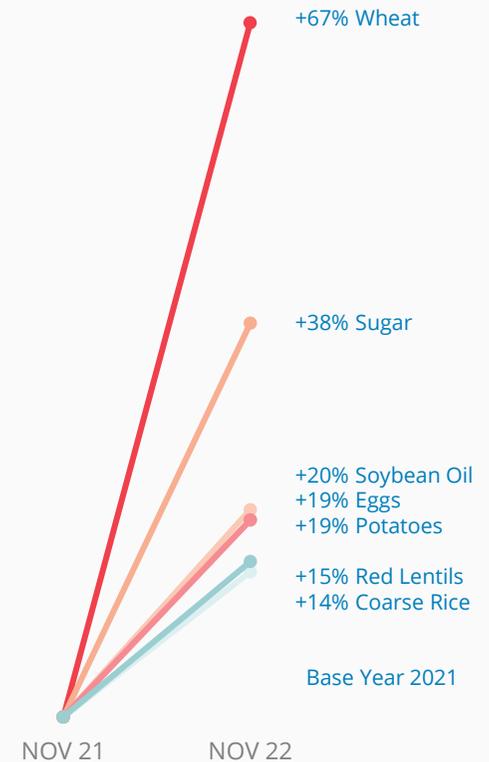
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



Prices of commodities continued to increase

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR*



¹ Consumer Price Index, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics October 2022. A CPI is an index to measure the monthly change in prices paid by consumers.

² November inflation rate was compared as the survey took place in the first week of December, and the households recall period was seven days to thirty days.

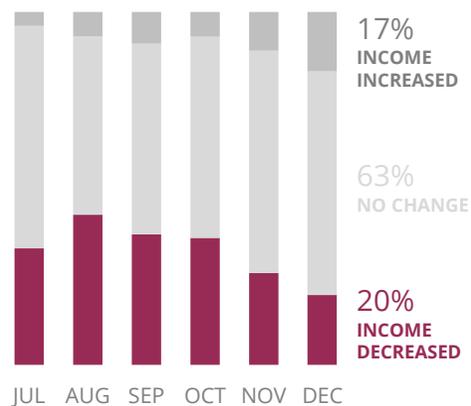
Some Households recovered from income losses while expenditures were rising

A gradual decrease in the households' reported income loss with increased expenditures. A 17 percent Household reported decreased income in December, an almost double improvement from July and August. This is due to a gradual resume of the seasonal labour market. While the proportion of households with less income has remained at around one-in-five, this does not necessarily signal stability, as these were seasonal and without disasters, such as floods and cyclones. More importantly, the global food crisis drastically spiked food and non-food prices for quite a few months since its onset. As a result, most households (80 percent) reported increased expenditures.

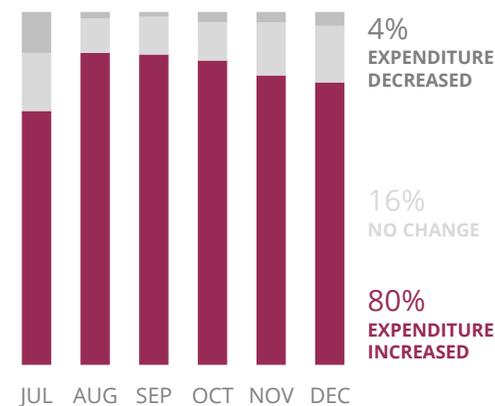
Almost half of the households reported a five to twenty percent loss of income in December. In all the divisions, the percentage of households (17%) that reported income loss decreased compared to November (36%). A six-month trend revealed a positive slow recovery from income losses, and August had been the worst month.



% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN INCOME



% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE

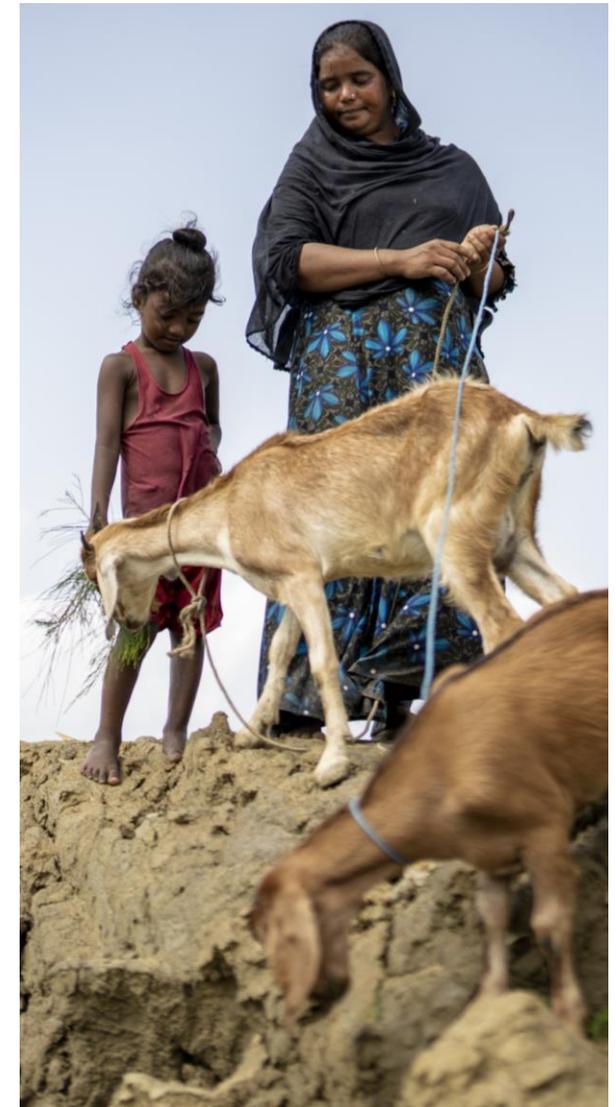




Background and Methodology

The remote food security monitoring system (mVAM) in Bangladesh was launched in July 2022 and collects data via telephone interviews from households across the country. Data was collected from 1,200 respondents across eight divisions since July; thus, the report is entirely based on these surveyed households. The data precision is +/-8 percent, with a 95 percent confidence level at the divisional level. The mVAM survey was launched to provide near real-time analytics on food security and essential needs analysis across the country. It allows regular assessment of the impact of shocks, including the developing global food crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, and floods.

Bangladesh's situation comes in the midst of a global food crisis which has generated a wave of upheaval in markets and which risks exacerbating the situation even further. Globally, conflict, COVID-19, the climate crisis and rising costs have combined in 2022 to create jeopardy for up to 828 million hungry people across the world. Learn more [here](#).



Other Resources



Q4 MARKET MONITOR

A regular summary of changes in the market, with a focus on recent developments



COUNTRY BRIEFS

A monthly **overview** of WFP's activities in Bangladesh, including situational and operational updates

Acknowledgments:

Arifeen Akter, Mahbubul Alam,
Kaniz Fatema & Sanjida Showkat

Photo Credits:

© Sayed Asif Mohammed/WFP

For further information:

Domenico Scalpelli
Country Director & Representative
domenico.scalpelli@wfp.org

Takahiro UTSUMI
Head of RAM (Research, Monitoring and Assessment)
takahiro.utsumi@wfp.org

Din Ara Wahid
VAM Officer (Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping)
dinara.wahid@wfp.org

World Food Programme

Bangladesh