



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Bangladesh Food Security and Vulnerability Monitoring (mVAM) August 2022

mVAM system

The remote food security monitoring system (mVAM) was launched in July 2022 and collects data via telephone interviews from households across Bangladesh. Data was collected from 1,200 sampled households across eight divisions. The mVAM survey was launched to provide near real-time analytics on food security and essential needs analysis across the country. It allows for assessing the impact of shocks, including the developing global food crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, and floods. Note that phone interviews are more prone to bias and should be interpreted carefully.*

Highlights

- Global food crises and fuel price hikes continued to impact the food commodity prices in Bangladesh, as global food prices remain at a 10 year high despite declining slightly in recent months.
- In August, 22 percent of the surveyed households were moderately food insecure, an improvement from 29 percent reported in July. Amongst the different income groups, 42 percent of the low-income households were moderately food insecure and were in a deteriorating situation concerning all the indicators. Households continued to apply food-based and livelihood coping mechanisms, and their exhaustion was reported due to severe price hikes, unemployment, sickness, and the adverse impact of natural hazards.
- Concerning food consumption in August, an average of 68 percent of households surveyed had an adequate diet, compared to 50 percent in July. The survey revealed that the nutrient uptake worsened in August amongst the low and medium-income household groups, especially intake of heme iron, which was remarkably low. The high-income group remained stable and consistent in all aspects of food security indicators compared to other groups, except for a few minor changes. There had been a significant decrease in income in August with an increase in expenditure. The low and medium-income groups were the hardest hit by recurrent shocks. These continuous food insecurity shocks have major implications for the future ability of households to become resilient.
- Households in Sylhet were still recovering from the adverse impact of the severe flood, as 35 percent of the households reported to be food insecure. In the short and long run, medium and low-income households are the most vulnerable without sustainable livelihoods sources. The households among these income groups were already exhausted with negative coping mechanisms and might not have the ability to stand any future shocks. In August, it is noteworthy that the situation in the Barishal division was concerning in terms of food insecurity, poor diet, and negative coping mechanisms. It was due to overall high poverty rates and the negative impact of the price shock.

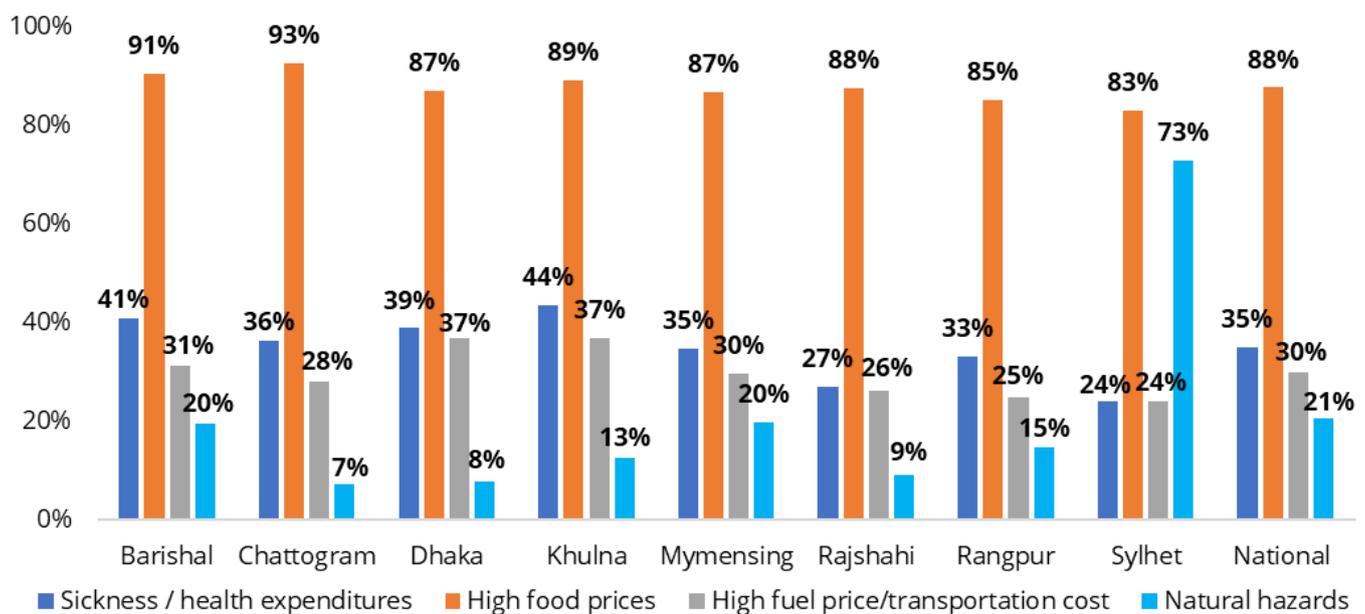
* N.B.. This is a phone based survey therefore it may differ from the official statistics.

Situation Overview

- After allowing fuel prices to rise by about 50 percent in early August, the government reduced fuel tax by 10 percentage points at the end of the month, resulting in about 4 percent decrease (BDT 5) per litre decrease in the import duty of diesel by the National Board of Revenue.
- The government reduced the import duty on rice and planning to import about 1.2 million mt of food grain, including rice, from Russia and Vietnam. The government has started selling rice at subsidized prices to support 5 million poor and low-income earners and stabilize the volatile rice market.
- Prices of almost all kinds of rice, eggs, lentils, chilli, sugar, some varieties of fish, garlic, onion, ginger, and turmeric went up in August, according to the BBS
- The general inflation remained high at 7.5 percent in July 2022 from 7.6 percent in June. The June 2022 inflation rate was the highest in the last 8 years due to significantly high food prices in the national and international markets. Both food and non-food inflation rates also remained at similar levels (8.2 percent in July compared to 8.4 percent in June for food inflation and 6.4 percent in July compared to 6.3 percent in June for non-food inflation).

Shocks

Figure 1: Main shocks and stresses of the households in the last six months



In August, most households continued to suffer double, triple shocks of high food and fuel prices, natural disasters, and health issues. Price hikes remained the most challenging in the past six months, negatively impacting income and expenditures. It is noteworthy that on top of these adverse events, the households in Sylhet reported experiencing the highest impacts from natural disasters due to the concurrent hit of floods in the monsoon season. It severely impacted their livelihoods, putting vulnerable people at more risk of recovering and absorbing future shocks. The households require food, livelihood, health, education, and shelter support.

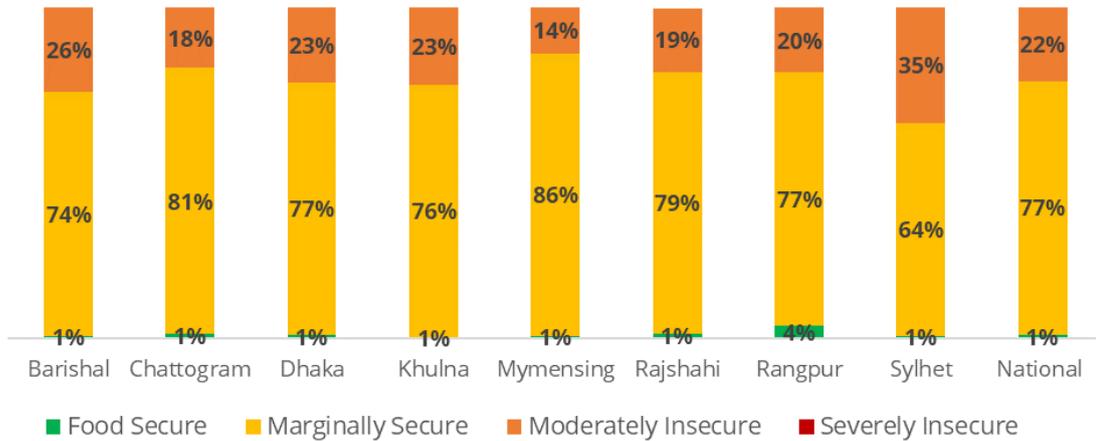
Priority Needs



Comprehensive Food Security— rCARI

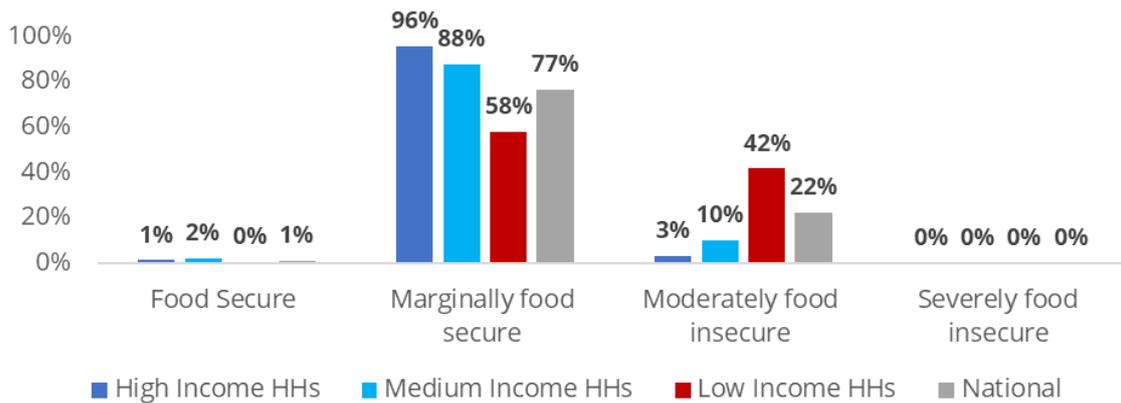
The remote comprehensive food security index (rCARI) is an aggregated index used to report on a population’s comprehensive food security. The indicators used to calculate this are: (i) food consumption scores, (ii) livelihood coping mechanisms, (iii) income sources, and (iv) income changes due to shocks.

Figure 2: Comprehensive Food Security of Households



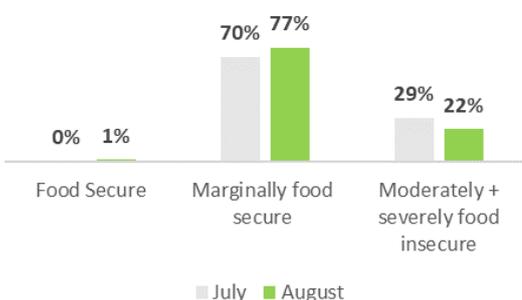
In August, the household comprehensive food security analysis showed that 22 percent of households were moderately food insecure, and 77 percent were marginally secure. These households exhibited food consumption gaps and applied crisis coping mechanisms to meet their required food and essential needs. A small percentage of the households (0.6 percent - 3.9 percent) were food secure in different divisions. In Sylhet, 35 percent of the households were exposed to being moderately food insecure, which was alarming if the households continued applying a negative coping mechanism for a long time. Cumulative shocks over a long period resulted in higher food insecurity, as seen among households as they experienced floods on top of the market price volatility.

Figure 3: Comprehensive Food Security of Households in different income group



The economic group-wise analysis driven by the occupation revealed the situation of the different income groups. As per the analysis, a significantly low percentage of the households were food secure; 77 percent of the households interviewed were marginally food secure. Amongst the low-income groups, 42 percent of the households were moderately food insecure in August, which was higher than the national average; natural disasters and price shocks hit them the hardest. Most poor households reported having low-quality food and significantly less protein, oil, fruits, and vegetables due to lower purchasing power and constant high prices. A comparison of the comprehensive food security analysis of the surveyed households showed a shift of 7 percent from a moderate to marginally food secured situation in August across the country. It might have resulted from the influence of the high-income group in the analysis and the slightly reduced coping mechanisms.

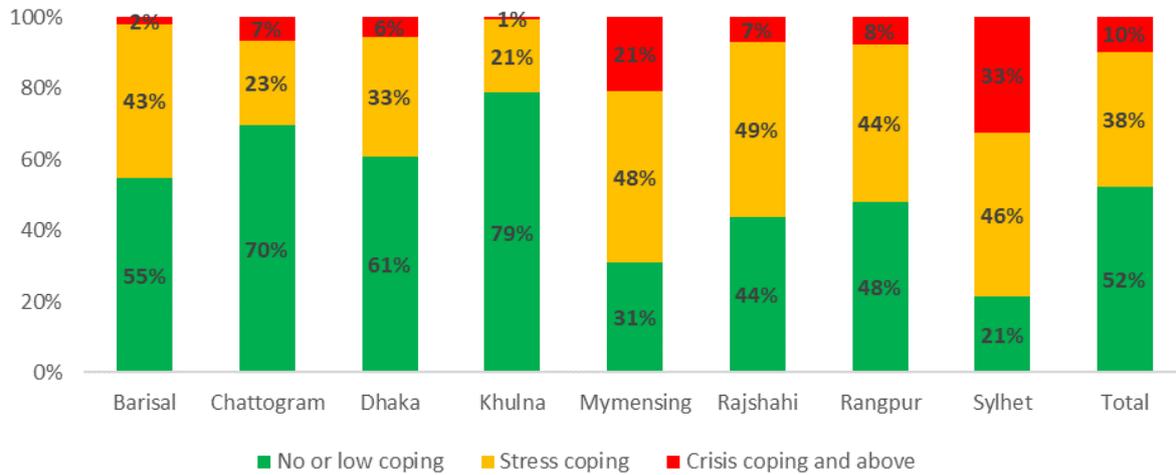
Figure 4: Comprehensive Food Security in two months



Food-Based Coping Strategy (rCSI)

Reduced food-based coping strategies (rCSI) scores are 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.

Figure 5: Food-based coping mechanisms (% of households)



In August, 59 percent of households had no or low coping, and 41 percent had stress to crisis coping in accessing food. The divisional averages showed similar trends. Among the households, a broadly used coping strategy was eating less preferred and cheaper food. The further granular analysis of the income groups showed differences distinctly and identified the low-income households as the most vulnerable, as 11 percent were in crisis coping and 51 percent were in stress coping. The poor households reported buying food on credit, support from friends and family, limiting portion sizes, and the number of meals in hardship. Only 38 percent of households in the low-income group are in no or low coping, mostly due to exhaustion of coping mechanisms in the previous months. Among the high-income group, 90 percent of the households were in a safer zone, and 9 percent were in stress coping due to fixed income and high food prices.

Figure 6: Food-Based Coping of the Households among the different income group

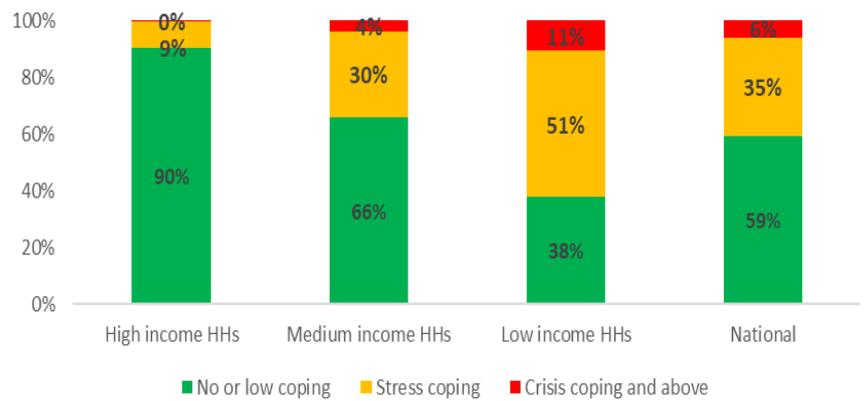
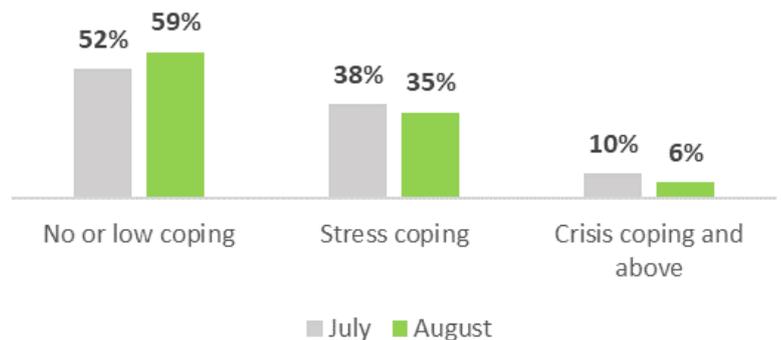


Figure 7: Food based coping in two months

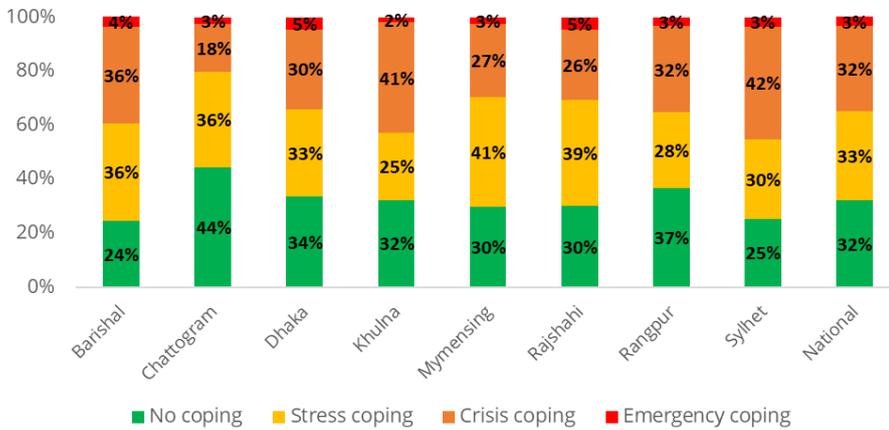


The household's food-based coping mechanism has slightly improved regarding the percentage of households that reported no or low coping. Still, the percentages are high as food-based coping has a severe negative impact on households with children, the elderly, pregnant women, and sick members.

Livelihood-Based Coping Strategy (LCSI) strategy

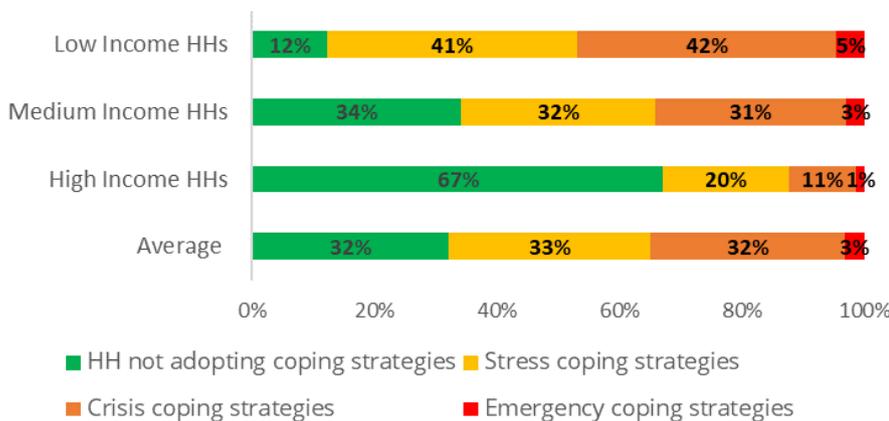
The Livelihood-based Coping Strategies Index (LCSI) builds on understanding the behaviours vulnerable households engage in to meet their immediate food security and essential needs in times of crisis or shock.

Figure 8: Livelihood-based coping mechanisms (percent of households)



In August, 32 percent of households had better livelihood conditions with access to food. In comparison, 68 percent of households struggled to access food through different coping mechanisms across the country. The most broadly used livelihood coping was selling household assets and borrowing; 64 percent of households reported having debts in enduring such hardship. It is a serious concern that 29 percent of households reported spending savings, among which 10 percent reported the exhaustion of all savings on food purchases in the last 12 months. At the divisional level, the situation in Sylhet and Barishal was concerning as more than 75 percent of the households surveyed were under stress to emergency coping mechanisms, indicating a reduced ability to stand any further shock.

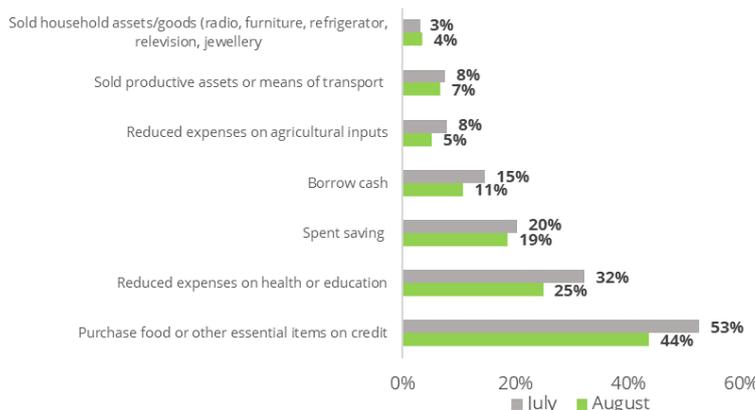
Figure 9: Livelihood-based coping mechanisms (percent of households)



The analysis got into further detail about the income group responses. Like the food-based coping index, the livelihood coping index revealed a clear distinction among the different income groups. A clear gradual decrease in the percentages of the no-coping households was observed among the low-income group. Only 32 percent accessed food and essential needs without coping, which was 34 percent and 67 percent of households in the medium and high-income groups.

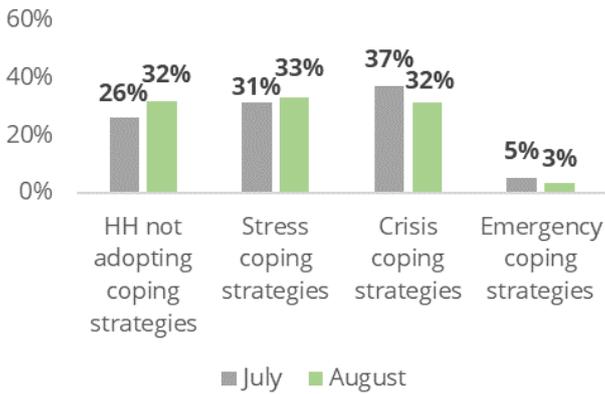
A large number of households in the low-income group were reported to be vulnerable as they were continuing hardship to access food and meet essential needs, more than 80 percent of households were broadly using stress to crisis coping, and on top of that, 5 percent were in emergency coping meaning they had no other options except for going hungry with skipping meals, begging or engaging in illegal activities. More than 90 percent of households reported not receiving any assistance.

Figure 10: Livelihood coping mechanism used by the vulnerable households



In August, 44 percent of the surveyed households purchased food on credit, 19 percent spent savings, and 11 percent borrowed cash. It is slightly better than July, although many of the households reported having no other options left as the means of coping. Coupled with such a situation, reducing health expenses, including drugs and education, directly impacts the future livelihood inability. Reducing expenses on agricultural inputs indicates future loss in productivity. In the long run, more shocks will threaten the medium-income group as they are already in some negative coping mechanisms for livelihood and access to food and basic needs. The poor group will remain the hardest hit.

Figure 11: Livelihood based coping



The analysis revealed almost an unchanged situation in livelihood coping of households employing no stress, crisis, and emergency coping mechanisms from July to August, which indicates a potential of the further worsening situation in the short run as they have been coping with higher prices, decreased income, health issues, and natural shocks. Regardless of the income groups, 88 percent of households complained about high price hikes in August. Around 73 percent of households reported sufferings significantly from the flood and other shocks.

Food Consumption

Concerning the food consumption status in August, overall, 68 percent of households across the country in eight divisions had an acceptable diet, 13 percentage points less than in July.

Figure 12: Food Consumption Score (% of household)

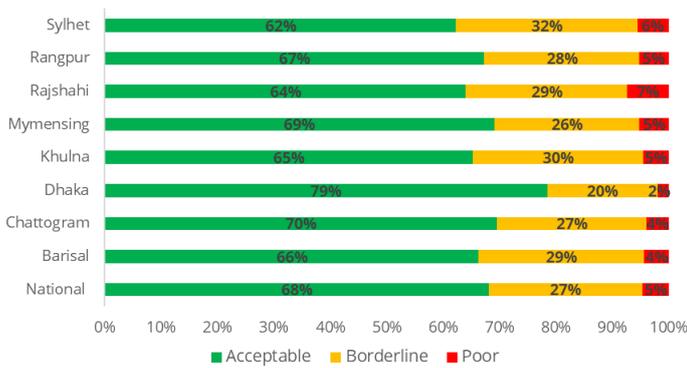
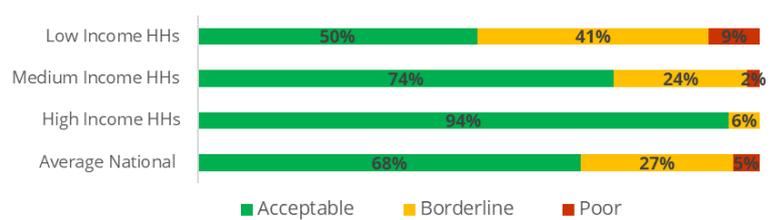


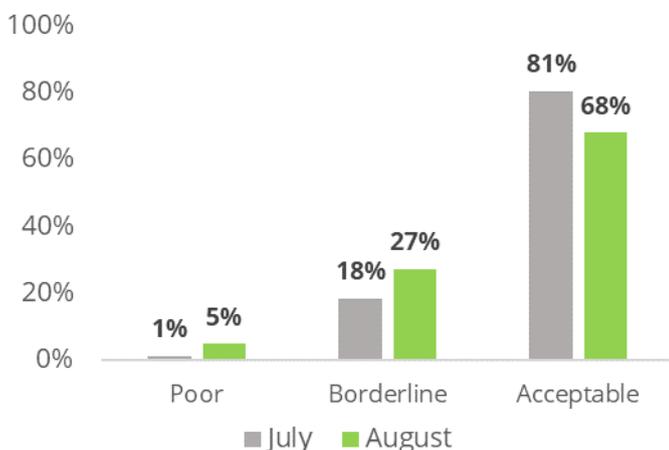
Figure 13: Food Consumption Score among different income group (% of household)



The price shock and income loss had led to a contraction in overall consumption. The seasonal non-availability of fish and local fruits also had an impact. Except for Dhaka, households surveyed in all the other divisions were in similar percentages.

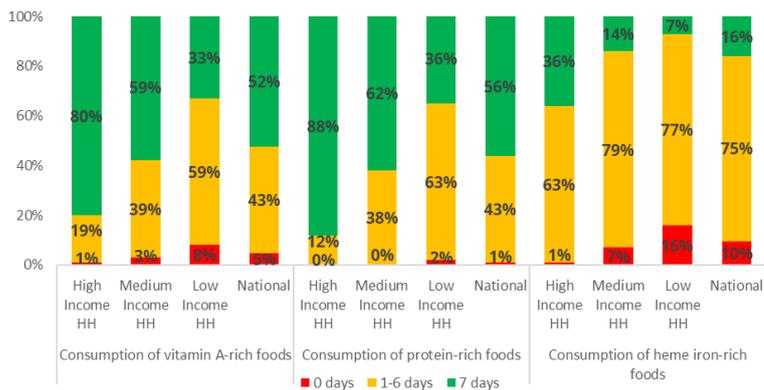
The households consumed more potatoes than vegetables as vegetable prices were beyond the grips of medium and low-income groups. As per income group analysis, 94 percent of high-income households met acceptable diet needs, and only 6 percent were on the borderline. The survey revealed that 50 percent of households in the low-income group struggled to maintain an acceptable diet, among which 9 percent had a poor diet, and 41 percent were on the borderline. The reported negative coping mechanisms coupled with stable price hikes and low income will impact food consumption patterns and nutritional status more in the coming days.

Figure 14: Food Consumption Score



The percentages of households meeting acceptable diets among the households surveyed across the country decreased from July to August. The decline in access to an acceptable diet is reflected in a shift of more households to borderline and poor food consumption in August. Income group analysis showed this notable deteriorating shift for low and medium-income households. The high-income group remained stable in July and August. The consumption of nutrient-rich food indicator revealed a clear distinction amongst the income groups and within rounds (July-August). Households in July reported limited availability of low-priced mangoes due to seasonal supply and fish due to the monsoon flood, which was reflected in their higher protein and vitamin A consumption. In July and August, heme-rich food intake was considerably low in almost all income groups and reported a significant deterioration in the low-income group within the two rounds.

Figure 15: Days with consumption of nutrient rich food (% of households)

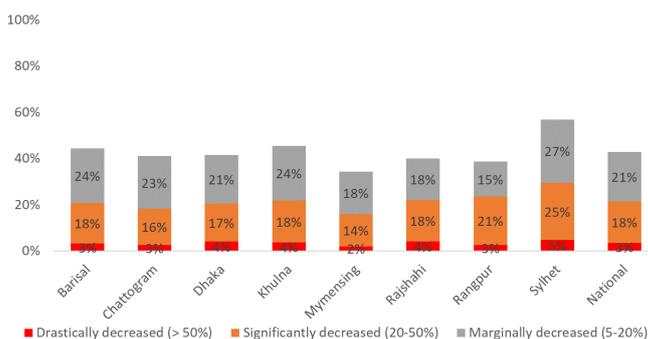


From the perspective of the nutrient consumption for the seven days before the survey, the results showed 52 percent of households consuming Vitamin-A-rich food every day, and 56 percent of households had regular protein intake. Heme-rich food intake was much lower in the surveyed households across the country. Only 17 percent of households regularly consumed heme-rich food, 75 percent had it irregularly, and 10 percent had no heme-rich food in their diet. The lower income group was worse in surveyed nutrient consumption categories in their diet. Healthwise, these are alarming signs, especially the households with children and pregnant and lactating mothers. Across the country, 37 percent of households surveyed had children under 5, 30 percent had elderly members, and 8 percent with pregnant mothers.

Income and Expenditure

In August, 42 percent of households reported a decrease in income, and only 7 percent reported an increase. The households that lost their income over the last six months were 44 percent fall in the low-income group, 35 percent in the medium-income group, and 22 percent in the high-income group. The reasons for the loss of income were due to loss of employment, reduced daily labour opportunities, disruption in market functionality, price hikes, reduced

Figure 16: Negative income change (% of households)



assistance, illness, and health expenditure increases. Significantly, 53 percent reported having no secondary income sources. Among all the divisions, a significant percent of households in Khulna, Dhaka, Sylhet and Barishal reported income loss over the last six months. On the contrary, 88 percent of households reported increased household expenditure. More than 12 percent reported a 50 percent increase, 38 percent within a 20-50 percent increase, and 38 percent within a 5-20 percent increase in expenditure over the last three months. Loss of income, coupled with an increase in expenditure, forced the households to apply negative coping mechanisms to ensure minimum access to food and well-being.

Figure 17: Change of income (% of households)

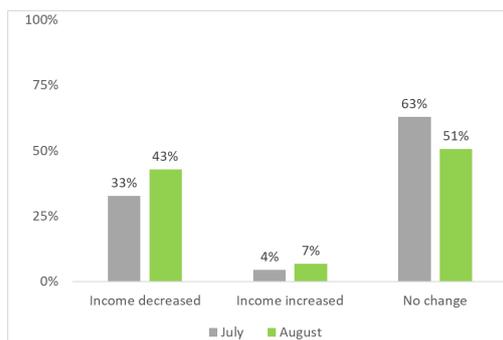
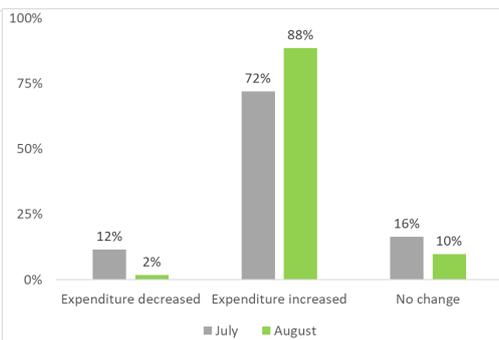


Figure 18: Change in expenditure (% of households)



A comparison of the income and expenditure depicted that many households lost their income significantly in July and August and struggled with increased expenditure, resulting in applying negative coping mechanisms. Very few percent of households had an increase in income. The decline in income was cascaded in all income groups, especially in the low and medium-income groups. However, the drop in income was steeper for the low-income group, which depends most-

ly on skilled and non-skilled daily labourers, petty traders, etc. The purchasing power of the reported households had significantly deteriorated to three indicators: high price, significant loss of income, and increased expenditure. Changes in income and expenditures have severe implications on the ability of households to stand food security shocks and resilience.

References

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