

TAJIKISTAN

A Report on the Food Security and Nutrition Impact of the 2021 Khatlon Mudflows

Food Security and Nutrition Cluster

June 2021



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About this report

This report presents findings from the rapid food security and nutrition household survey and key informant interviews conducted between 25-28 May 2021 to assess the impact of floods and mudflows in six of the most affected districts in Khatlon region of Tajikistan. The assessment was carried out on behalf of the food security and nutrition cluster and in overall coordination by the Committee of Emergency Situation (CoES) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The assessment was technically led by WFP (Food Security) and UNICEF (Nutrition), with the participation of Agha Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) and the Tajikistan Red Crescent.

KEY FINDINGS



The floods and mudflows in Khatlon region has greatly impacted the food security situation of the affected population with an estimated 70 percent in need of immediate food assistance. Kulob city had the highest proportion of food insecure population.

The disaster has severely restricted the households' current access to food with loss of food stocks reported by more than half of the surveyed households which is of primary concern.



62 percent of the surveyed households lost growing field crops that they depended on to ensure access to food and generate income for the next few months. Almost one-third of the households lost lands that were being prepared for cultivation. Such destruction of livelihood assets means that the affected households are likely to be dependent on external assistance until their livelihoods are restored.



Markets were found to be open and food commodities were generally available in the affected areas. However, increased food prices coupled with low purchasing power of the households will restrict them from accessing foods in adequate quantity and quality. Thirty percent of households were already facing the shock of increased food prices before the disaster.



Also of concern is the significant presence of population groups with special needs such as children under 5, pregnant women and lactating mothers. Among surveyed children, those who were not given breastmilk and/or animal milk at all before and after the disaster increased by 12 percentage points, whereas those who were given breastmilk and/or animal milk five times or more in a day decreased from 45 percent to 38 percent before and after the disaster.



Among the surveyed pregnant women, only 19 percent and 13 percent of them reported consuming an iron supplement and an iodine supplement, respectively, a day before the assessment. Additionally, pregnant women's diets were shown to be inadequate. Consumption of animal source proteins, including meat and poultry (16%), fish (0%) and eggs (3%), was low. Only 13 percent of pregnant women had dark green leafy vegetables, while only a tenth of them had fruits and vegetables that are rich in vitamin A. These patterns suggest low dietary diversity and insufficient protein and micronutrient intakes among pregnant women.



Majority of households preferred cash transfer as assistance modality. The key informant interviews revealed that while there is an urgent need to provide immediate relief, planning of early recovery activities should also be prioritized. Interventions aimed at restoration of damaged assets, creation of employment opportunities, support to the most vulnerable and environmental safeguards need to be implemented to build household resilience and prevent future disasters.

BACKGROUND



The torrential rains of 7 – 12 May 2021 triggered floods, landslides and mudflows in many of the country's districts with following cities and districts in Khatlon province most affected: Kulob city, Vakhsh, Jomi, Vose, Shamsiddini Shohin, Yovon, Dusti, Muminobod, Dangara, and Farkhor.



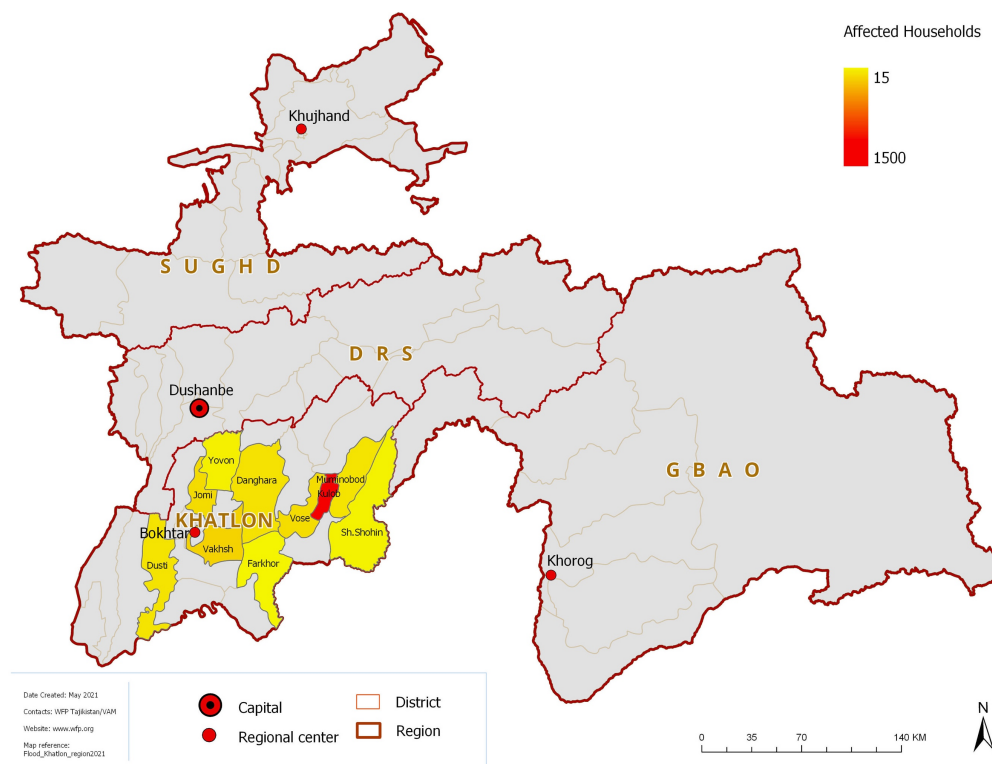
Recent estimates put the total affected households and population at 2,516 and 17,454¹ respectively.



The updated figures indicate destruction of around 111 houses and damages to over 400 houses. Destruction of crops on over 2,500 ha of agricultural lands (including kitchen gardens) and loss of over 1,000 heads of cattle have also been reported.



The disaster has serious consequences on shelter, health, food security, nutrition and water and sanitation status of the population residing in the affected areas.



1. Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) Situation Report # 3 (as of 26 May 2021)

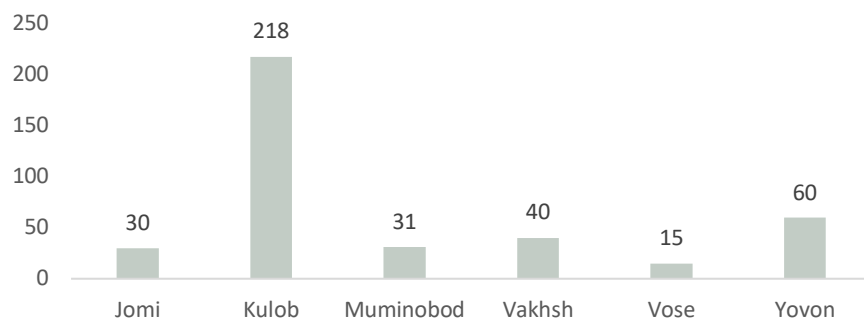
METHOD

The assessment included the household and individual level surveys and key informant interview tools with the main objective of understanding the impact of floods and mudflows on the food and nutrition security of the households and individuals including children under two years and pregnant women and their priority needs in some of the most affected districts of Khatlon region to plan response activities.

Information from 396 affected households, including 72 pregnant women and 125 children below 2 years, were collected during the assessment period of 25-28 May, covering topics ranging from impact on livelihoods and food consumption to coping strategies, infant and young child feeding practices and assistance needs. The sample was distributed proportional to the number of affected households² in Kulob city, Jomi, Muminobod, Vakhsh, Yovon and Vose.

The household survey was complemented by the key informant interviews administered to the community leaders who provided information on the impact of the disaster at community level and main priorities to rebuild the livelihoods that have been lost. A total of 10 key informants were interviewed.

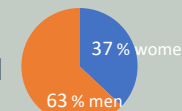
Number of household interviews by districts



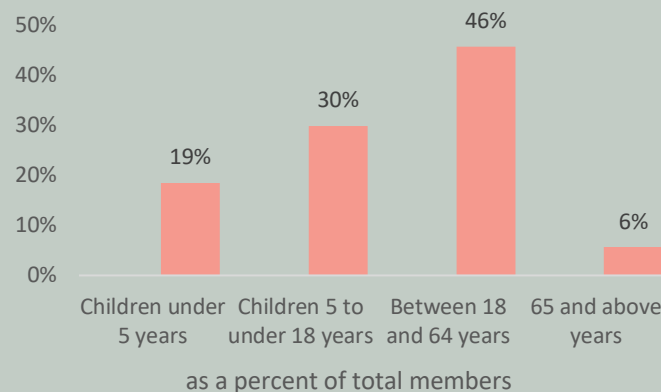
DEMOGRAPHY



Gender of household head



Population distribution



Households with pregnant women or breast-feeding mothers

24%

Among the surveyed households, 37 percent were found to be women-headed and almost one-fourth of the households had at least one pregnant or lactating mother. Out of all the members in the surveyed households, 20 percent were children under 5, highlighting the presence of large population groups with special needs.

2. Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) Situation Report # 2 (as of 19 May 2021)

DISASTER IMPACT

For the affected households, the disaster has severely restricted their current access to food, decimated agricultural livelihoods and deteriorated their health status. With the loss of food stocks as reported by more than half of the households, their current consumption levels have declined significantly. Forty-nine (49) percent of households in Kulob reported loss of food stocks.

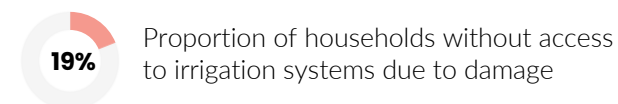
Significant losses of agricultural and productive assets were reported. Sixty-two (62) percent of the surveyed households lost growing field crops that they depended on to ensure access to food and generate income for the next few months. Almost one-third of the households lost lands that were being prepared for cultivation. Households have also suffered losses of assets like irrigation canals, food storage capacity and domestic animals causing significant disruption to their agricultural livelihoods.

Almost a quarter of households also reported that at least one of their non-working members had been sick after the disaster. Additionally, sickness to working member was reported by 12 percent of households which has further deteriorated their ability to recover from the shock.

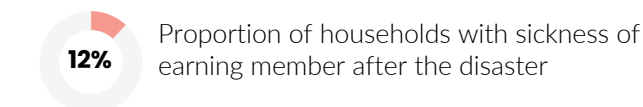
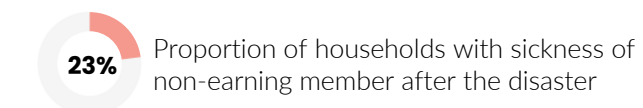
FOOD ACCESS



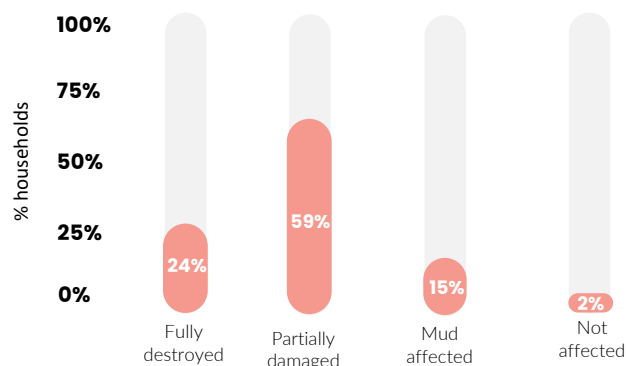
AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOODS



HEALTH



HOUSING CONDITION



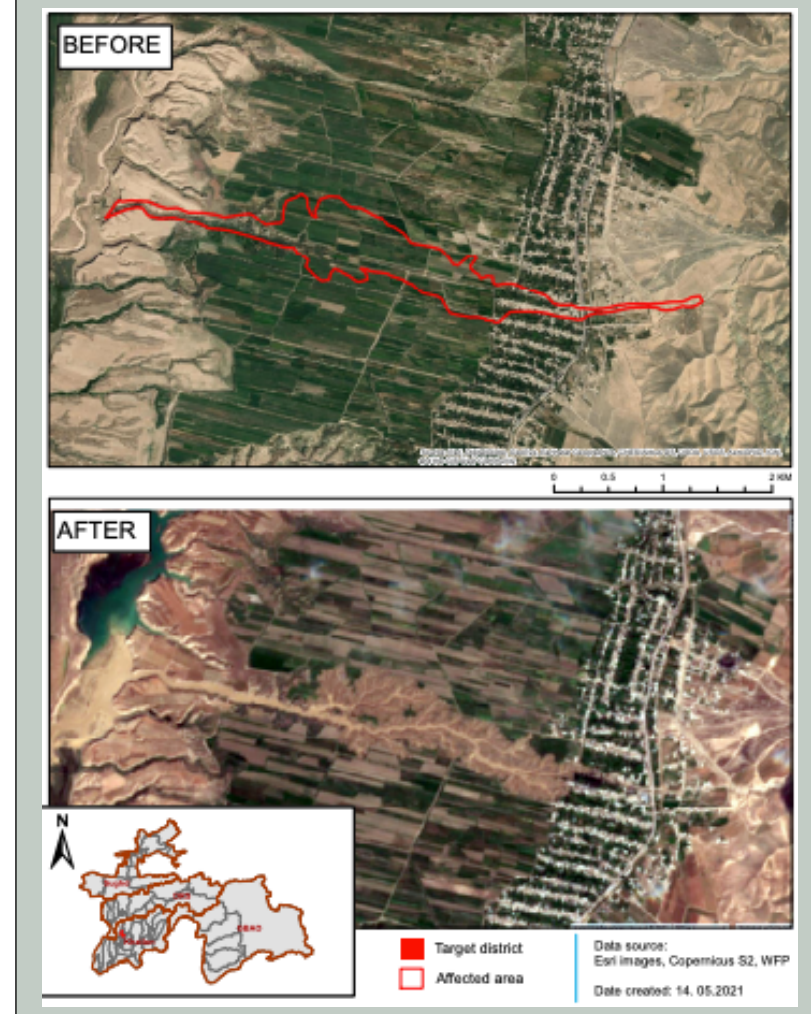
With almost one-fourth reporting full destruction, almost all of the affected households were found to have sustained extensive damages to their homes leading to the displacement of more than a quarter of them.

AERIAL VIEW OF THE DISASTER AND ITS IMPACT

The image below makes a comparison of the area affected by the disaster in Vakhsh district. It can be seen that both the crop lands and residential areas have been affected by the mudflow.



The before and after images shown below for Jomi district distinctly highlight significant damages to crop areas as the cultivated land got inundated by the mudflow.

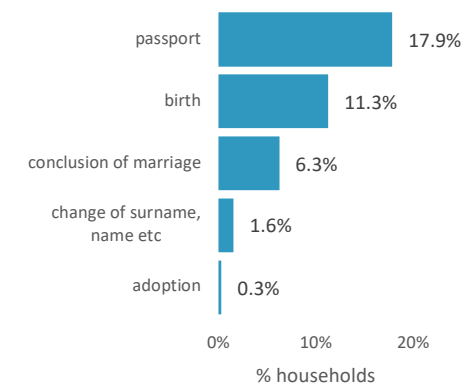


Source: Esri images, Copernicus S2. based on WFP Tajikistan GIS team's own analysis.

LOSS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION DOCUMENT

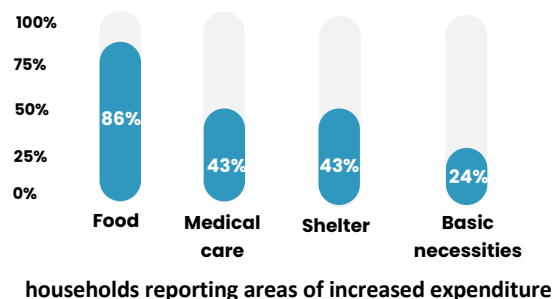
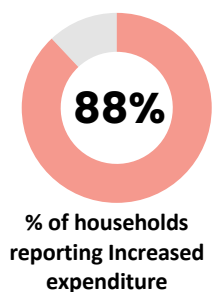
Almost a quarter of the households (23%) lost their civil registration documents including the passports, birth certificates further restricting their ability to go out and work in neighboring countries like Russia which is one of the main sources of income for households in Tajikistan.

households who lost civil registration documents



INCREASED EXPENDITURE

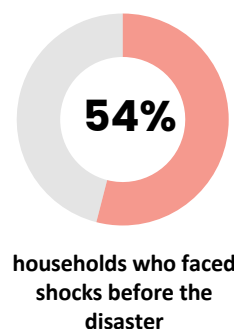
A significant proportion of surveyed households also reported an increase in expenditure after the disaster, primarily for the purpose of buying food as their food stocks were lost. Larger proportion of households in Kulob and Yovon reported increased expenditure while the lowest proportion was from Jomi.



PRE-DISASTER SHOCKS

When households were asked about the shocks they had been facing before the floods and mudflows, more than half of them reported that they had already been reeling from increased food prices, sickness of family members resulting in increased health expenses and income losses, and different natural hazards, among others.

The need to enhance resilience of the households so that they are better able to absorb economic and natural shocks without significant loss of their asset base has been one of the key findings of the assessment.



Types of shocks (pre-disaster)	% of households
Increased food commodity prices	29.7%
Sickness or death of household member[s]	21.3%
Natural hazard	18.5%
Increased non-food commodity prices	10.2%
Increased/high agricultural inputs prices	7.6%
Crop/Livestock loss	6.9%
Loss of employment	4.3%
Other	3.8%
Loss/reduction of remittances	2.0%

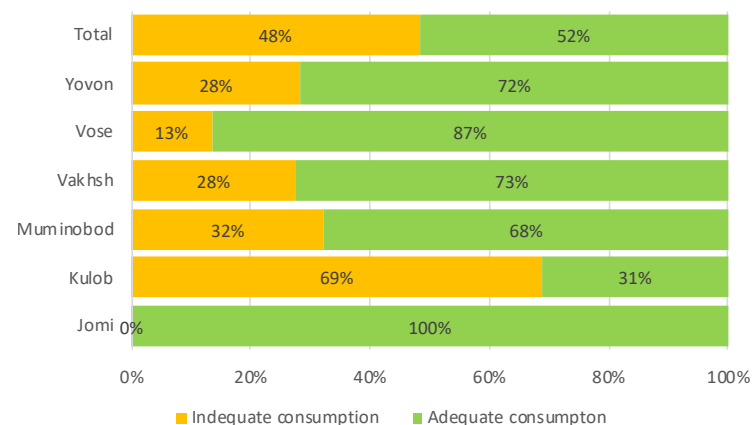
FOOD SECURITY

A month after the disaster, the levels of food insecurity are alarming with almost half of the surveyed households reporting inadequate food consumption. Adoption of negative coping strategies is widespread among the affected households.

ACCESS TO FOOD

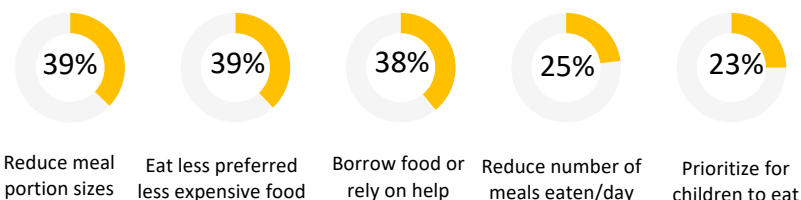
When asked about the number of times various food groups were consumed in the last 7 days preceding the survey, results showed that 48 percent of the households had been consuming diet lacking in adequate quantity and frequency. This proportion was highest in Kulob (69%) whereas all households were found to be consuming adequate diet in Jomi. The key informant for Jomi highlighted that the affected households have been receiving assistance in the form of cash and food. For Kulob city, the key informant reported a significant decrease in the diet quality and frequency among the affected households.

Food consumption groups disaggregated by surveyed districts as a percentage of households

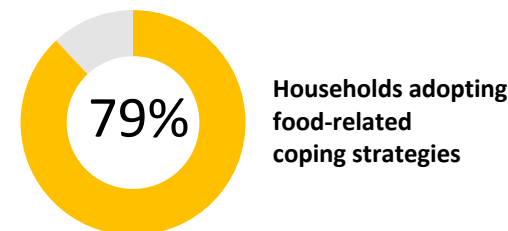


COPING STRATEGIES

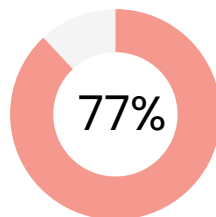
A large proportion of the surveyed households were found to have adopted one or more food-based coping strategies. Behaviour such as reducing portion sizes of meals, eating less preferred foods and borrowing food or relying on help from friends or relatives were the most common ones. These strategies have clearly translated into poor current food consumption among the surveyed households and also



highlight uncertainty they face in their future access to food which is why they are trying to reduce consumption to extend their current food resources as long as possible.

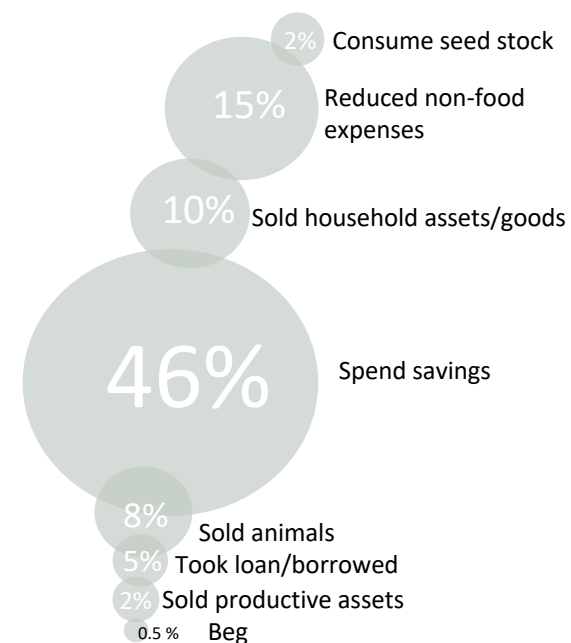


More than three fourths of households were engaging in livelihood eroding coping strategies of varying severity. More severe ones include the crisis level coping strategies such as consuming seed stocks, reducing essential non-food expenditures and selling productive assets which reduce future productivity while emergency level strategies, which are the most severe, such as begging are more dramatic in nature and are almost always the last resort.



Households adopting livelihood-based coping strategies

Households adopting various livelihood eroding coping strategies

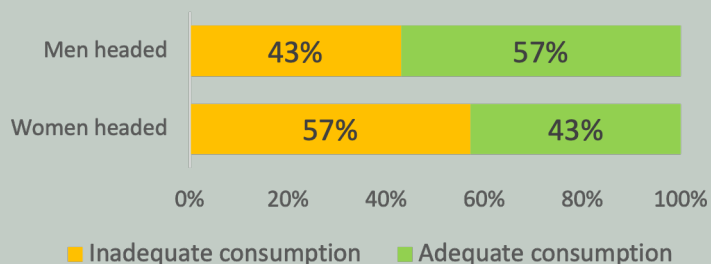


Number of days food stock will last



GENDER AND FOOD INSECURITY

Among the surveyed households, it was found that a larger proportion of women headed households were consuming inadequate diet compared to households headed by men.



It was also found that for women headed households, the food stock would be utilized within days (7 days) compared to the households headed by men (9 days).

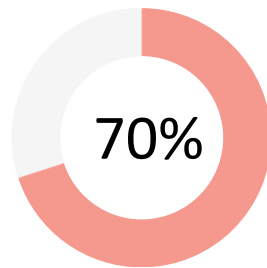
Additionally, a higher proportion of households (90%) headed by men had children eating 3 or more meals a day before the survey compared to women headed households (85%).

POPULATION IN NEED

On the basis of the three indicators that measure the prevalence of inadequate food consumption, adoption of crisis or emergency level livelihood strategies and extent of damage to houses, 70% of surveyed households were found to be in immediate need of food assistance meaning that they fulfilled one or more of the three aforementioned criteria. Provision of such assistance will help them meet their current food needs and prevent them from engaging in coping strategies that are detrimental to their ability to withstand future shocks and eventual recovery from the disaster.

Estimation of population in need:

Proportion of households with inadequate food consumption: 48%
Proportion of households adopting crisis or emergency level coping strategies: 14%
Proportion of households with completely damaged buildings: 24%



Households in need of immediate assistance

Profile of the population in need

The population in need of assistance are characterized by lack of adequate food consumption, are engaged in food-based coping strategies like reducing meal sizes, reducing number of meals eaten in a day and restricting adult consumption so that children could eat.

One-third of population in need have been displaced from their homes and are living next to their houses or in temporary shelters, school buildings or with their extended families or neighbors.

Almost 40 percent are women-headed households and 66 percent have at least one child under the age of five.

DEMOGRAPHICS

% Women-headed HH

39%

% HH with children under 5

65%

% HH with pregnant women or lactating mothers

25%

FOOD ACCESS

% HH with inadequate food consumption

69%

% HH with high food-based coping

50%

% HH with crisis/emergency coping

19%

DISPLACEMENT

% HH who were displaced from their houses

33%

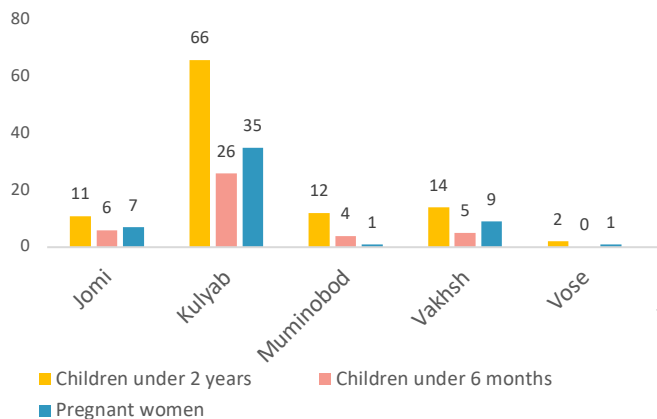
0%

50%

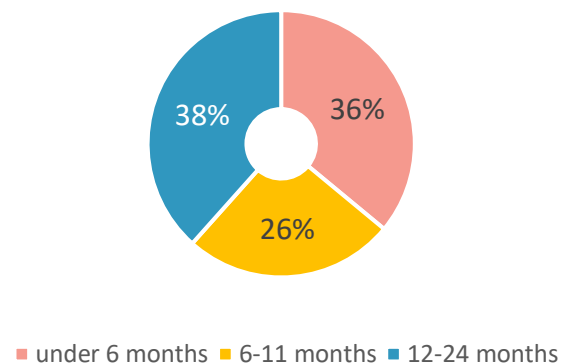
100%

NUTRITION

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION



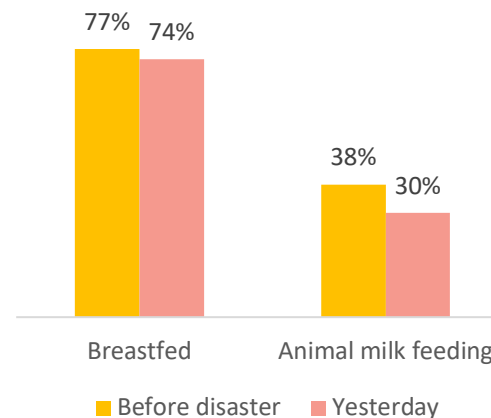
CHILDREN AGE DISTRIBUTION



BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES

Breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of a child’s life and continued breastfeeding from six months to two years and beyond along with appropriate complementary feeding is one of the most effective practices to promote growth and development of a child and protect against morbidity and mortality, even in emergency situations. Caregivers were asked about breastfeeding and provision of animal milk for children under two years in the household before and after the disaster. A slight decrease in breastfeeding and animal milk provision was observed. While 77 percent of children were breastfed before the disaster, 74 percent were still breastfed after the disaster. The animal milk provision decreased from 38 percent to 30 percent before and after the disaster, respectively. No change in exclusive breastfeeding among children under six months was observed (84% before and after disaster)

Proportion of children breastfed or given animal milk before and after disaster



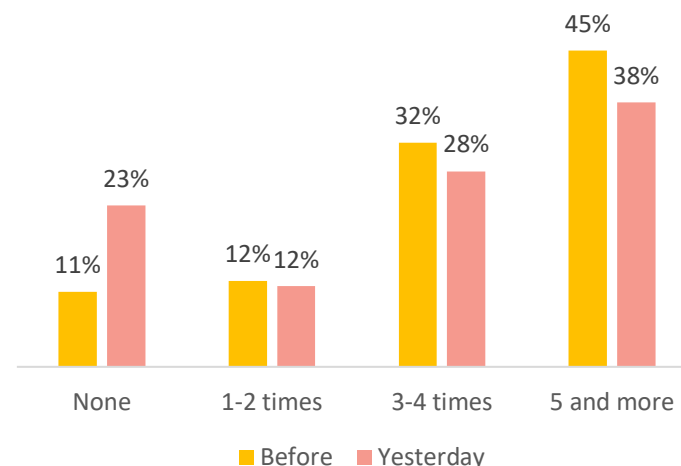
Frequency of breastfeeding and/or animal milk provision has decreased after the disaster. Children who were not given breastmilk and/or animal milk at all before and after the disaster increased by 12 percentage points, whereas those who were given breastmilk and/or animal milk five times or more in a day decreased from 45 percent to 38 percent before and after the disaster, respectively. Similarly, those who were fed breastmilk and/or animal milk 3-4 times a day decreased by 4 percentage points. The key informant interviews suggested that stress caused by the disaster may have affected lactating women’s ability to produce milk and led to mothers switching to animal milk. The household questionnaire on food security also revealed that livestock lost to the disaster was a major reason for the reduction in animal milk consumption among young children.

COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING

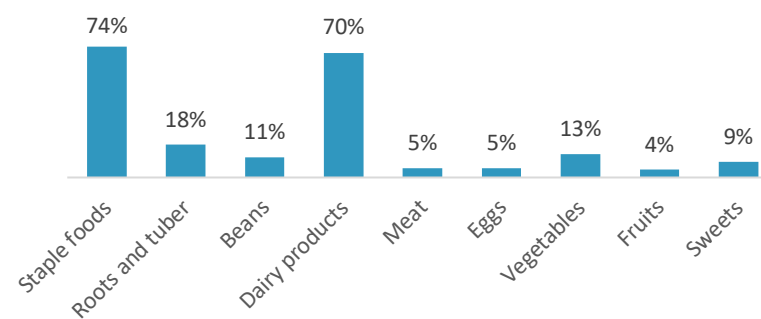
Timely introduction of age-appropriate and adequate complementary feeding is crucial for meeting a growing child’s energy and nutrient needs. Overall, the children included in the assessment had poor food consumption patterns. Caregivers were asked about which food groups were given to their child a day before the assessment. 74 percent of children had staple starchy foods and 18 percent of them had white roots or tubers. Although 70 percent of them had dairy products (this excludes breastmilk), consumption of other animal-source proteins including meat and eggs was low at 5.3 percent. Fruits and vegetable consumption was also negligible at 4 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Close to one in ten (9%) children had sugary snacks.

While it was not possible to compare the eating habits of the population before and after the disaster due to lack of recent data on their food consumption patterns prior the disaster, key informants repeatedly mentioned that food prices had been increasing and many food commodities had been unaffordable even before the disaster due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Coupled with the financial burden placed on families due to unemployment and reduced income, damage to the agriculture lands and loss of stored food items are preventing caregivers from accessing nutritious, diverse foods, which may not be affordable in the markets. Similarly, key informants confirmed the availability but unaffordability of fortified complementary foods for young children in shops.

Frequency of breastmilk or animal milk consumption by children under two before and after the disaster



Food groups fed to children 6-23 months a day before the assessment



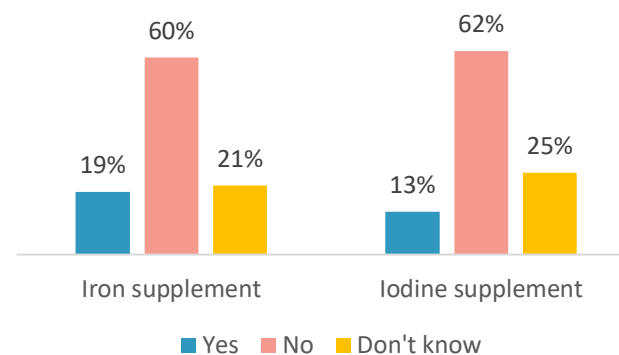
MATERNAL NUTRITION

During pregnancy, nutritional needs of women increase, and their nutritional status directly affects their health, that of the fetus and pregnancy outcomes. Therefore, it is critical to understand the nutrition situation and factors that affect it in an emergency situation and provide support based on the analysis. Pregnant women are recommended to consume iron supplements throughout pregnancy to prevent iron deficiency anemia and iodine supplements if salt iodization is insufficient. In the current assessment, only 19 percent and 13 percent of pregnant women reported consuming an iron supplement and an iodine supplement, respectively, a day before the assessment. The majority of the respondents either did not take these supplements or did not know about them. However, it was not possible to determine whether the low intake was due to the disaster or it had already been low before.

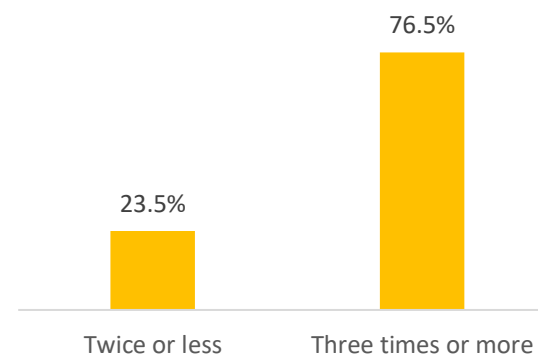
Pregnant women were also asked about how many meals they had the previous day. Almost a quarter (24%) of them had meals only twice or less. As noted in the food security assessment, one of the coping strategies households adopted was reduced meal frequency. This appears to be a cost issue rather than availability, as most key informants mentioned that diverse food items were available in the market but were unaffordable for many families.

Pregnant women's diets were shown to be inadequate. Consumption of animal source proteins, including meat and poultry (16%), fish (0%) and eggs (3%), was low, although over one in three (36%) of them had some kind of dairy products. Only 13% of pregnant women had dark green leafy vegetables, while only a tenth of them had fruits and vegetables that are rich in vitamin A. None of them consumed nuts and seeds. 18 percent and 5 percent of them consumed, respectively, fats and oil and sugary snacks. These patterns suggest low dietary diversity and insufficient protein and micronutrient intakes among pregnant women.

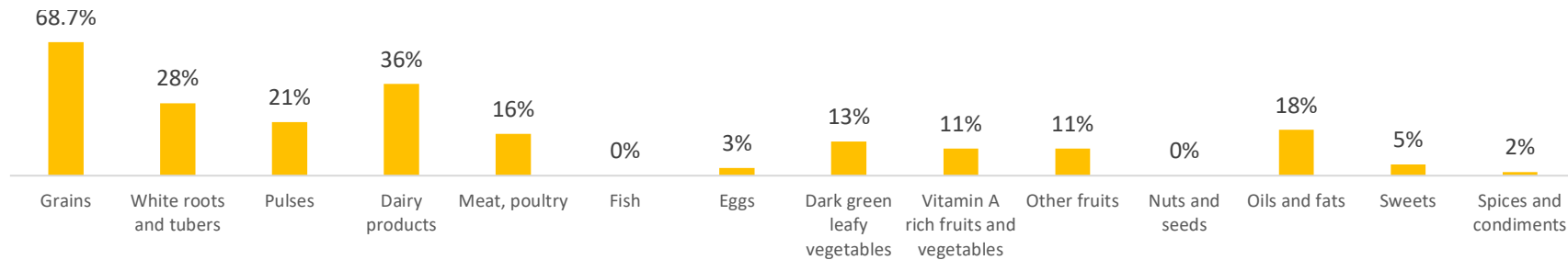
Intake of micronutrient supplements by pregnant women a day before the assessment



Meal frequency among pregnant women a day before the assessment



Food groups consumed by pregnant women a day before the assessment



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK AND OTHER CONCERNS

The key informant interviews and household surveys with the affected population for the food security alluded to the economic hardship posed by the COVID-19 outbreak and difficulties in consuming diversified diets due to unaffordability of food items, which started long before the disaster occurred. This together with the effects of the disaster may have the potential to quickly worsen the long-term outlook of the nutritional status of young children and pregnant women. Since the eating patterns had already deteriorated due to the pandemic, some key informants noted that the support (cash and food assistance) received from government and non-government bodies after the disaster has enabled the communities to have better (i.e. more quantity and more diversity) diets than before the disaster.

Considering the results of the WASH sector assessment where poor access to and quality of water and incidences of diarrhea were highlighted, a risk of increased severe and moderate acute malnutrition among children should be noted. Although key informants confirmed that healthcare professionals are available in the community to provide services to anyone who reports ill health, their capacity to provide nutrition services may be suboptimal as not all healthcare providers are trained on essential nutrition services. Furthermore, IYCF counselling and maternal nutrition counselling may not be given to the targeted populations as young children and pregnant women do not necessarily have sickness and thus the caregivers and pregnant women may not be actively seeking health and nutrition services.

One key informant in Jomi district mentioned the Breastmilk Substitute donation by an international NGO. This needs to be further investigated and regular monitoring of BMS donation in communities is required.

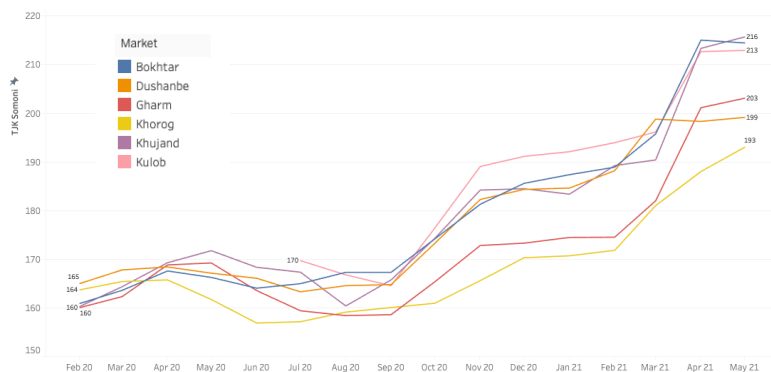
POPULATION IN NEED

Number of children less than five years (15%) in a population of 18,000	2,700
Number of moderately malnourished children (5.6%)	295 (burden of MAM)
Number of severely malnourished children (1.8%)	95 (burden of SAM)
Number of pregnant and lactating women	3,000

MARKETS

Based on the key informant interviews, markets were open and food commodities were generally available in the markets in the affected areas. However, access to food was hindered by the rising food prices and low purchasing power of the households in all the surveyed districts. In Vose, the key informant added that prices rose further after agricultural lands were affected by the mudflows.

WFP conducts price monitoring of key food and non-food commodities on a weekly basis in the major markets across the country, including the Khatlon region where prices from Kulob and Bokhtar markets are collected. Data reveal that prices in Kulob and Bokhtar markets have been rising since the middle of the last year, similar to other markets in different regions of Tajikistan. Compared to most markets, the average price of a food basket consisting of 10 essential food commodities was found to be higher in Kulob and Bokhtar markets.



Price trend of key commodities in Kulob and Bokhtar markets



This graph shows the price trend of food basket consisting of 10 essential items in different markets. The food commodities included here are wheat flour (first grade), potatoes, onion, milk, eggs, vegetable and cotton oil, beef, mutton and rice.

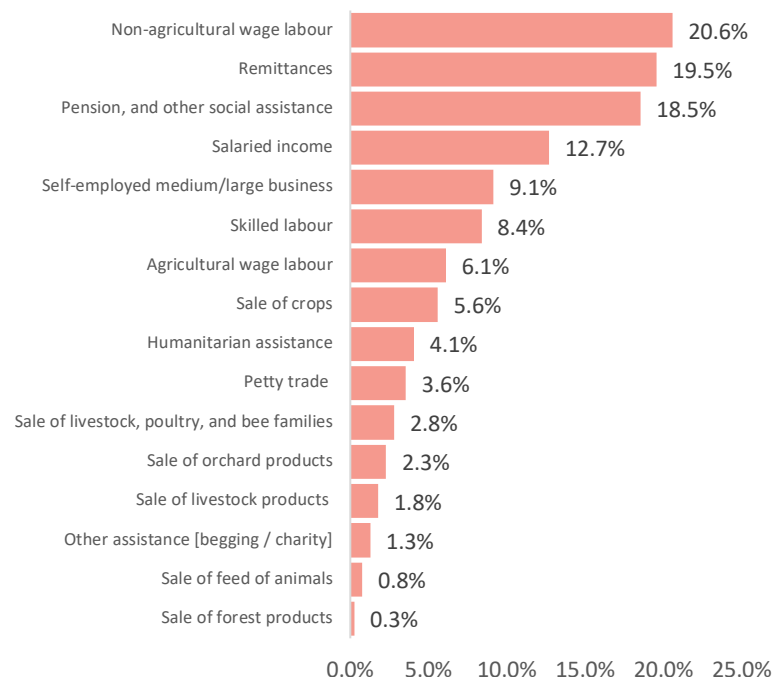
LIVELIHOODS

Three months before the households were affected by floods and mudflows, they relied primarily on non-agricultural wage labour activities, remittances and government provided social protection systems like pensions and social assistance to generate cash income. This signals an agricultural lean season where most crops are growing.

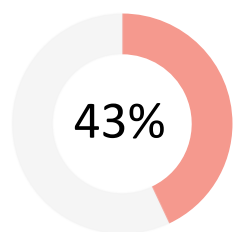
Sixty-four (64) percent of the surveyed households reported that they owned land for agricultural activities and that crops were at the growing stage when the disaster hit. In Kulob, this proportion was 50 percent and the largest proportion of households with land were found in Yovon at 93 percent.

For the next 12 months, only 10 percent of the surveyed households were considering farming as a viable livelihood strategy with most of them planning to find local employment or migrating. This is likely due to the loss of agricultural assets suffered by the households. This calls for a need to implement projects that can create local employment opportunities for the affected households. Households are likely to benefit from food or cash assistance for asset types of activities where they are able to work towards rehabilitating their household or community assets while making some income.

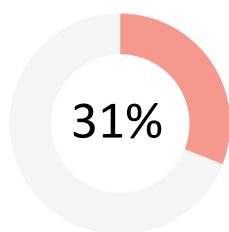
Livelihood strategies of households before the disaster



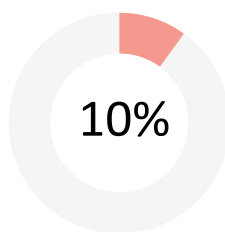
Households considering different livelihood strategies in the next 12 months



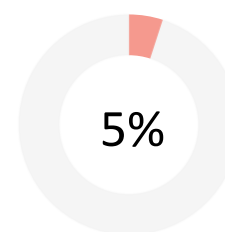
Local employment



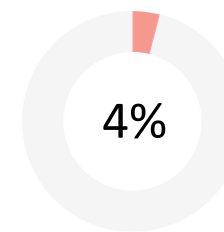
Migration



Farming



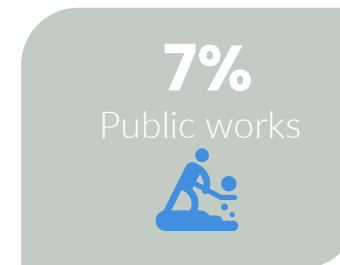
Business/
Entrepreneurship



Taking loans

KEY PRIORITIES

Majority of surveyed households reported that they would prefer cash as the most suitable form of immediate assistance in order to meet their essential needs.



FOOD SECURITY

The key informants proposed interventions to address the immediate food gap faced by the affected communities. They also proposed long term early recovery activities that will help the households recover from disaster and start rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.

Immediate needs:

- Food and/or cash assistance will be needed to ensure unconstrained access to food given that households are quickly running out of stocks and savings.

Medium term needs:

- Recovery efforts must be expedited in the community by supporting employment creation through agriculture and non-agriculture activities.
- Projects to stimulate people to work on rehabilitation of assets while earning income will be of great benefit to the community.
- Most vulnerable groups in the communities must be supported through income generation training and activities.
- Environmental safeguard activities must be implemented to prevent future disasters by means of afforestation/reforestation, flood prevention measures, land management, including erosion control and hillside/riverbank stabilization, and planning activities, etc.

NUTRITION

Immediate needs:

- Life-saving preventive nutrition services for women and children: IYCF-E counselling, micronutrient supplementation at health facilities and households, support to maternal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.
- Life-saving curative interventions: community- and facility-based screening for acute malnutrition, followed by referral for treatment of acutely malnourished cases including with therapeutic foods with monitoring of children and women's nutritional status through admission caseloads.

- Strengthened capacity of government health facility staff and sector partners on treatment and management of acute malnutrition, on IYCF-E counselling and awareness raising on nutrition in facilities and communities.
- Monitoring of violations of the International Code of Marketing of the Breast Milk Substitutes (BMS), donation and uncontrolled distributions of BMS.
- Community-based nutrition communication activities.
- Establishment of coordinated and integrated nutrition programs across relevant sectors through enhanced coordination and joint programming where relevant.
- CBT for PLWG / MAM prevention.
- U5 MAM prevention and treatment.

Medium term needs:

- Establish a mechanism for monitoring the nutrition situation in the affected areas.
- Active routine screening by healthcare workers and treatment of SAM in the affected communities, given the reduced quantity and quality of foods consumed by children and worsened WASH conditions giving rise to diarrheal cases.
- Inclusion of pregnant women and young children under 2 years in the food/cash assistance, accompanied by nutrition messages on healthy, safe and nutritious eating/feeding and care practices.
- Capacity development of health staff and sector partners on routine reporting and nutrition assessments to ensure sufficient preparedness and an efficient response once needed.

BUDGET REQUIREMENT

Nutrition support:

ESTIMATED BUDGET (USD)	Secured	Non-secured	Total
Short term response May-July 2021	0	150,000	150,000
Mid term response August-December 2021	0	200,380	200,380
GRAND TOTAL	0	350,380	350,380

Items	Cost (USD)
Micronutrient powders	160,380
Iron and folic acid supplements	10,000
Therapeutic feeding centers	30,000
Freight	40,000

Training	60,000
IEC	50,000
Total	350,380

Food security support:

ESTIMATED BUDGET (USD)	
Food commodities and Cash based transfers	1,165,000

ANNEX

LIMITATIONS

- Since this was a rapid assessment among the sub-population groups (i.e. children under two and pregnant women), the sample size was small and the sample population for nutrition assessment was not representative of the total population of interest.
- A full set of standard indicators on breastfeeding and complementary feeding could not be collected due to several factors such as limited time and human resources available.
- Since there were no recent data on nutrition practices among the population in the assessed districts, it was not possible to determine any changes in practice pre- vs. post-disaster and thus establish correlation between the effect of the disaster and the assessed nutrition practices.