






Understanding Child Protection and Food Security linkages

Mali Case Study

MAIN FINDINGS

- Households with married children (children below 18) were found to be more vulnerable to food insecurity than households without married children (17% vs. 14%)
- Households hosting separated children/orphans are more likely to send children to work in exchange of food (6% vs. 3%). Gao, Tombouctou and Mopti are the regions where the linkages between food insecurity and child protection are more defined, with the highest prevalence of households reporting that they have children engaged in forms or child labour (including work in exchange of food and/or engagement in illegal income generating activities)
- Households sending children to work in exchange for food consume more inadequate diets than households that do not involve children in such a coping mechanism (44% vs. 24%).

MAIN INDICATORS

| | |
|---|-----|
|  Presence of children (age < 18) | 98% |
|  Children contributing to income | 60% |
|  Presence of separated children | 9% |
|  Early marriage | 5% |
|  Children engaged in negative coping strategies | 1% |

BACKGROUND ON THE INITIATIVE

In humanitarian crises, just as protection concerns can cause food insecurity, food insecurity can cause child protection concerns. As outlined in the Child Protection and Food Security Linkages analysis¹ food insecurity and economic stresses press families to make difficult survival decisions that ultimately affect their children. The choices available to meet immediate food security needs have lasting consequences on how well children and their families build capacities to overcome the shocks in their environments. When families prioritize short term survival needs, they may turn to strategies such as early marriage, child labour to reduce food scarcity in the household, and withdrawing children from school so they can participate in income generating activities.

In areas characterized by food insecurity, children are exposed to different risks and negative coping mechanisms. According to the Global Report on Food Crisis² in 2018, food insecurity is increasing globally. With increasing levels of hunger and food insecurity, it can be expected that children disproportionately affected. This is so, as households are forced to adopt negative strategies in an attempt to meet food shortfalls, which, in turn, affect the well-being of the children. Food assistance is one of the key life-saving responses in humanitarian crises and one that can significantly improve the safety and wellbeing of the children. Therefore, many benefits arise from a close collaboration between Child Protection and Food Security actors. Working together encourages an integrated approach to streamline food security and child protection responses.

Humanitarian context

After more than five years since the outbreak of conflict in Northern Mali, intercommunal violence and clashes between armed groups continue to trigger displacements and disrupt the livelihoods of thousands of households, whose capacity to withstand shocks have been progressively eroded by consecutive droughts, floods, epidemics and chronic poverty. The highly volatile security context is likely to result in a deterioration of the humanitarian situation, increasing protection, food, health and education needs².

According to the [2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), the areas with the highest percentage of people in need are Tombouctou, Gao, Mopti (between 30% and 40%), followed by Kidal, Koulikoro and Kayes with an estimated 20% to 29% of population in need. Child Protection actors estimate that more than 500,000 children need support and assistance. Children face several risks and protection concerns, including forced recruitment, lack of civil documents such as birth certificates, sexual exploitation, forced and early marriage. Lack of access to education and limited resources exacerbate these risks. Malnutrition, lack of education and protection of children and young people, especially girls, is worrisome. The number of closed schools has increased significantly – i.e. 500 in 2018.

This initial analysis aims at identifying proxies that reveal linkages between food security and child protection. Note that, this document is not intended to present an extensive and specialized child protection analysis, rather it aims to strengthen and foster complementarity between analyses on the possible linkages between food insecurity and child protection concerns. Additional discussions with actors from both sectors and comparative studies with child protection sector's assessments and situation analyses are needed to complement the existing findings.

DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Overview

- According to the ENSAN conducted in September 2018, 19% of households are food insecure (out of which 3% are severely food insecure); the regions recording the highest prevalence of food insecurity are Kidal (47%), Mopti (34%), Gao (28%) and Tombouctou (25%). Together with poverty and agro-climatic and economic shocks, conflict, insecurity and displacement are among the primary drivers of food insecurity³.
- Household size: on average out of 14 household members⁴, 7 are children.
- Orphans/separated children⁵: Overall, 9% of surveyed household reported to host orphans/separated children, particularly in Northern and Central Mali. The highest prevalence is observed in Gao and Tombouctou (reaching 13% and 12%, respectively).

ABOUT THE ENSAN

The *Enquete Nationale sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle* (ENSAN) is a food security and nutrition assessment conducted in Mali twice a year since 2012 during the months of February and September. In preparation of the September 2018 round, the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping team (VAM) with support from Child Protection partners, adjusted the existing questionnaire to better capture child protection concerns and assess their linkages with household level food security indicators. The indicators collected are: presence of orphans in the household, child marriage, child labour, consumption patterns and food security, involvement of children in the implementation of negative coping mechanisms to face food insecurity.

A total sample of 9,739 households was surveyed across the country, with the following breakdown at the regional level:

Tab.1: Distribution of the sample for the ENSAN Sep 2018

| Number of households surveyed | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|------------|-----|-------|--------|--|
| Kayes | Koulikoro | Sikasso | Ségou | Mopti | Tombouctou | Gao | Kidal | Bamako | |
| 1,227 | 1,319 | 1,328 | 1,310 | 1,438 | 710 | 610 | 597 | 1,200 | |

Of the households interviewed, 98% reported having at least one child among their members. The highest age group among the children population is represented by childhood (54%), followed by early childhood (39%) and adolescents (8%)⁶.

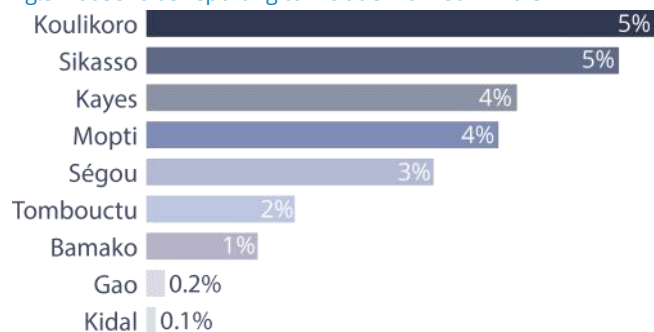
Child marriage

Overall, 5% of households reported having among their members a married child, with a higher prevalence in Koulikoro, Sikasso (5%), Kayes and Mopti (4%) regions. Gao and Kidal are areas where child marriage was reported the least (0.2% and 0.1% of households, respectively). Moreover, child marriage is more common among households located in rural areas than in urban settings (89% vs. 11%) .

With respect to gender, child marriage is more common among girls than boys (23% vs. 7%); similar patterns are observed across all regions.

In terms of linkages between food security and child marriage, households reporting to have female married children were found to be more food insecure than households reporting to have male married children (4% vs. 2%).

Fig.3 Households reporting to include married minors



Child labour

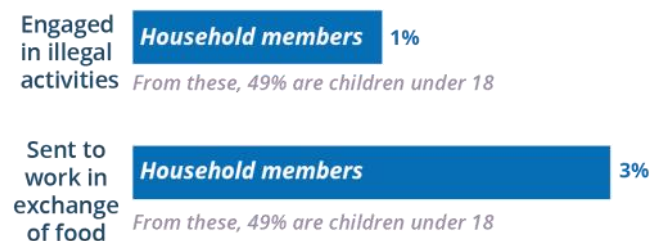
I. Negative coping strategies

Only 3% of households reported to have sent household members to work in exchange for food. However, almost half of households resorting this coping strategy also reported that children are implementing this coping mechanism. At the regional level, households in Tombouctou and Mopti are found to have the highest prevalence (24% and 8%, respectively). Sending household members to work in exchange for food was reported by 6% of households hosting separated/orphaned children, compared to only 2% of households not hosting orphaned/separated children. Moreover, the implementation of this strategy is more common among rural households than urban households (88% vs. 12%).

Resorting to illegal income generating activities is not a widely used coping mechanism: only 1% of households reported using this negative coping strategy. However, more than half of the households who engage in illegal income generating activities also reported that at least one child is engaged in this negative coping behaviour. At the regional level, this phenomenon is more common in Tombouctou, where almost all of the 7% of the households reporting to implement this strategy reported engaging at least one child engaged in this.

Fig.1 Coping mechanisms implemented by household members and children

COPING STRATEGIES



II. Contribution to household's income

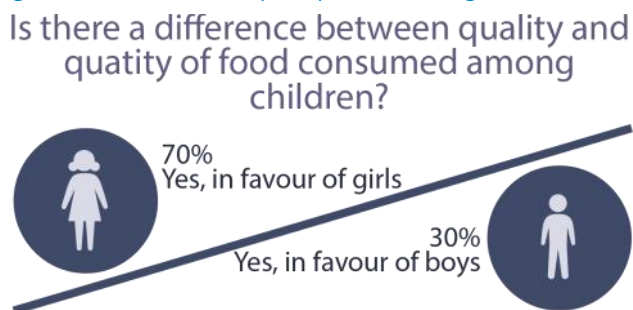
On average, one child per household contributes to household's income, with households in Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Segou regions reporting to have 2 children engaged in income generating activities. In Mopti and Tombouctou, children contribute to a higher share of the household income than children located in other regions.

Food security and diets consumed by children

Households with children among their members are found to be slightly more vulnerable to food insecurity⁷ than households without children (20% vs. 17%). Moreover, a wider proportion of households with children among their members consume inadequate diets⁸ compared to households without children (21% vs. 17%). There seems to be a link between dietary patterns and coping mechanism implemented: households who send children to work in exchange for food consume more inadequate diets than households where children are not involved in such a coping mechanism (44% vs. 24%). These households have also a higher rCSI⁹ (10 vs. 6).

According to 2% of households surveyed there is a difference in quantity and quality of food consumed by male and female children, with 7 households out of 10 reporting that this difference is attributed to favouring the consumption patterns of female children. At the regional level, Tombouctou is the region reporting the biggest difference in quantity and quality of food consumed between male and female children (10% of households), followed by Sikasso (5%) and Mopti (3%).

Fig.4 Difference in consumption patterns among children



SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DATA ANALYSIS

- To encourage an integrated approach for food security and child protection responses, joint analyses between child protection and food security actors should continue and be further encouraged. A framework to establish proxies, which identify protection and food security needs should be implemented in subsequent data collection exercises.
- Presence of orphans/separated children in Northern and Central Mali is higher than in other regions of the country. To better understand these findings and provide the most appropriate recommendations for response, this primary data analysis should be complemented with secondary data review.
- Households tend to favour consumption patterns of female children than those of their male counterparts. Secondary data analysis and discussions with focus groups or key informants (including child protection actors) are highly recommended to understand if this is part of social and/or cultural practices and if other existing reports identify similar findings.

- Food insecurity might be one of the (many) reasons why households resort to early marriage as a coping strategy. The analysis shows significant differences across regions. Therefore, it is not easy to understand the exact linkages between the two phenomena. Additional analysis and discussion around food security and child marriage patterns are highly recommended to identify socio-cultural or any other additional factors that might explain their linkages.



REFERENCES

¹ [Child Protection and Food Security linkages: A short argument for Food Security and Child Protection integrated analysis: toward collective outcomes, CP AoR, WFP 2017.](#)

² [Global Report on Food Crises, 2018.](#) According to the Cadre Harmonise analysis, during the lean season July–October, 795,000 people are forecast to face Crisis (CH Phase 3) and 20,000 people to face Emergency (CH Phase 4) food insecurity.

³ [Enquete Nationale sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle \(ENSAN Mali\), September 2018.](#)

⁴ The average household size varies from 6.5 in Kidal to 17.9 in Sikasso. Large households are more common in the South of the country (e.g. regions of Koulikoro, Sikasso, Bamako, Ségou), particularly in rural areas.

⁵ Orphan child: boy or girl under 18 with both parents dead.

⁶ Children aged between 0 and 4 years are defined as “early childhood”; children aged between 5 and 14 are defined as “childhood”; children aged between 15 and 18 are defined as “adolescents”.

⁷ Food insecurity severity is measured through the WFP indicator [Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\)](#).

⁸ Food consumption was measured through the WFP indicator Food Consumption Score (FCS), which is a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency, and relative nutritional importance of different food groups consumed (refer to [Technical Guidance Sheet - Food Consumption Analysis, February 2008](#)).

⁹ The reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) is a WFP indicator used to compare food security across different contexts. It is calculated using a specific set of behaviours with a universal set of severity weightings for each behaviour (refer to [The Coping Strategies Index Field Methods Manual, January 2008](#)).

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