

# Guidelines for Writing mVAM Bulletins



## General guidelines

- Keep the bulletin short. It is not necessary to report on all collected information.
- A good mVAM bulletin is no more than four pages and includes key findings, contextual/situation update, and interesting observations regarding monitored indicators (FCS, rCSI, food prices, etc.).
- You should also include one graph or chart per page. (You do not want to have too many graphics that may overwhelm the reader.)
- Ideally, the graphs/charts should display key trends, especially those highlighted in the *key findings* bullet points.
- A good bulletin includes trend analysis over time (i.e. time series analysis and comparisons to a baseline period where applicable), highlighting key changes that affect food security.
- It is important to include secondary information or contextual analysis to support key data findings, as this strengthens your overall messages.
- A good bulletin is a mix of text and images to keep the reader engaged.
- You can also use new tools such as Tableau to present your findings.
- Use a consistent format for all bulletins. A standard mVAM bulletin template is available. If you are using your own template, make sure editing/formatting is consistent.
- It is good practice to include a photo on the first page of your bulletin. It should not be the same photo from month to month.

## Introduction and Key Points

- **Title:** The title of your bulletin should be short (one line) and convey the key overall message of your findings.
  - ◊ Some examples of good titles include:
    - \* *Coping significantly improves in Sierra Leone;*
    - \* *Food insecurity persists in South despite harvest; and*
    - \* *Food security decreases in districts affected by new population displacements.*

All of these titles provide a general overview of the food security situation and attract the attention of the reader.
- **Key Points:** you should have 2-4 key messages.
  - ◊ After the analysis, ask yourself, "What are the key takeaways from the analysis?"
  - ◊ Key messages should be short, clear sentences that provide the reader with an understanding of the contents of the bulletin.
  - ◊ They should not involve lengthy comparisons or contextual details. These details are included in the narrative of the report, and the reader should be 'enticed' to look for them there.
  - ◊ Some examples of good key messages include:
    - \* In October, food security in the surveyed locations remained largely unchanged compared to September;
    - \* Wage rates remain stable in Liberia and increase slightly in Sierra Leone; and
    - \* Since July 2015, households have resorted to consuming less expensive/preferred food more frequently. Fruits and vegetables are reported to be scarce and/or too expensive.

## Context Overview/Update

- A good mVAM bulletin includes a very brief paragraph on the context (situation update).
- The situation update should be:

- ◊ Brief (maximum 3-5 sentences). It is not necessary to go into in-depth details.
- ◊ Focus on the key/latest developments that occurred during the data collection period.
- ◊ Include information relevant to the food security situation (e.g., agriculture seasonality, trade restrictions, inflation, increased displacements, and/or new food aid flows).
- For the context, you may want to consider:
  - ◊ Were there population movements during the data collection period due to conflicts in your areas of observation?
  - ◊ Were there regional or national strikes that may have impacted food prices?
  - ◊ Were abnormal weather patterns reported during this period that may have adversely affected planting or harvest? Droughts or floods? Insect outbreaks?
  - ◊ Was there political unrest that led to limited population/trade movements during the reporting period?
  - ◊ Were there major road closures during the data collection/reporting period?
  - ◊ Were there cross-border trade restrictions or other limiting political or economic factors that could have had an impact on food prices and food security within the country?
- Be sure not to include sensitive information that may endanger certain groups of the population. If population movements have not been confirmed, it's best to exclude this information.
- You should select the findings that are most relevant and interesting to report on and link them into one integrated story. A good story is more than statistics, it includes a narrative and a visualisation combined - it speaks to the reader.
- To develop the situation update, you should review all relevant, recent secondary data available, extract the key points, and compile them. Good resources for secondary data include:
  - ◊ [WFP country-specific information](#)
  - ◊ [WFP Operations Center OP Web](#)
  - ◊ [ReliefWeb](#)
  - ◊ [OCHA Humanitarian Bulletins/Situation Reports \(SitReps\)](#)
  - ◊ [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#)
  - ◊ <http://www.globaldtm.info/>
  - ◊ [Food Security Cluster](#)
  - ◊ [FAO GIEWS](#)

## Methodology

It is important to provide readers with a clear understanding of your sample size, data collection methodology, and any other information that could bias your findings. When you first start mVAM data collection, you should write out a detailed methodology note that can be posted on the mVAM country page (refer to the Nigeria example [here](#)). This will allow you to keep the methodology section short in all bulletins.

For recurring bulletins the methodology section should be 3-4 sentences and include the number of samples collected, from where they were collected, and how they were collected (key informants, random selection, registered households). If you used a key informant as opposed to household sampling strategy, it is important to highlight this in this section. The contents of this section can remain similar each month. A link to the methodology note should be included here for those who want additional details.

## Presentation of Main Findings

You can present your main findings in whichever order you like. For instance, you can present the household data and key informant data separately; or you can present them together by theme to better accentuate the fact that you are triangulating information. Consider what type of disaggregated analysis you will be able to do and report on aspects such as geographic location, female/male headed households, displacement status, livelihood groups, and socio-economic indicators. Ensure that you are presenting trend analysis in the bulletins and avoid highlighting only month-to-month changes.

Here are some examples on how you can organize your analysis:

- Food consumption and coping patterns
  - ◊ Food Consumption Score (FCS)
  - ◊ Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)
  - ◊ Livelihood Coping Index
- Markets
  - ◊ Access to markets
  - ◊ Price trends of key commodities or food basket
  - ◊ Terms of Trade
- Nutrition
  - ◊ Minimum Dietary Diversity - Women
  - ◊ Nutrition program admission rates
- Gender
  - ◊ FCS/rCSI by male versus female head of households
  - ◊ Percentage of displacement among female versus male respondents and the coping strategies used by the two groups
  - ◊ Food security perceptions among female vs. male respondents from the open-ended question.
- Reporting on open-ended questions
  - ◊ Community-level food security
  - ◊ Perceptions on upcoming security, harvest, access to markets
  - ◊ Priority needs
  - ◊ Sentiment analysis

### **Additional resources**

- For English writing style tips, consult: [WFP English Writing Style Guide](#)
- For a comprehensive guide on food security monitoring indicators: [FSMS Indicators Compendium](#)
- For data visualization: [Tableau](#)
- For open-ended response analysis: [Wordle](#) or [different text visualization tools](#)
- For sentiment analysis ('polarity test') to analyze text for sentiment: [Repustate](#)