

INTRODUCTION

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought extraordinary uncertainty the world over. Among vulnerable populations across the world, the pandemic has exacerbated already complex and fragile situations. It has been difficult for governments and international aid and development organizations to design timely and appropriate responses because impacts of the pandemic have varied greatly across contexts and have evolved rapidly.

Market and supply chain (MSC) monitoring systems are a valuable tool for filling the knowledge gaps and providing timely and accurate information to guide decision making in response to the pandemic. They collect primary data on markets and supply chains with surveys of various market actors. Supply and demand information is collected through many indicators, such as; commodity prices, income change, quarantines, restrictions, and closures.

Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) COVID-19 Market Supply Chain Monitoring Taskforce began in July 2020 out of partnership between Humanitarian Response Department and Program Impact and Quality Assurance. The system is currently being used by nine CRS Country Programs.

OBJECTIVES

For humanitarian organizations, the objective of monitoring markets and supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic is to provide data that will allow for a better understanding of how local and national markets are functioning and responding to the crisis. This insight can be used for more targeted proposals and to improve the effectiveness of ongoing programs.

The information gained by monitoring market conditions throughout the program cycle can be used to guide adaptation. Additionally, current market data may be required for proposals and is valuable for securing grants. Because of the rapidly changing nature of pandemics, up-to-date information from various market actors is critical for designing and implementing an effective humanitarian response.



Monitoring Markets and Supply Chains for Humanitarian COVID-19 Response

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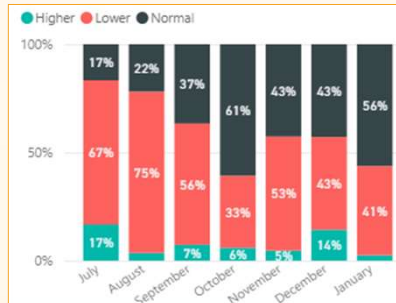
METHODS

Monitoring systems collect, tabulate, analyze and share relevant market data. CRS's system is implemented by Country Programs with support of the taskforce. Surveys of households, vendors, customs agents and freight forwarders are conducted every two weeks or monthly, at major ports as well as at markets of interest to programs. Surveys are done over the phone or in person with appropriate safety measures. Country Programs track unique sets of commodities that act as indicators of broader groups of items or are of particular concern, such as soap or staple goods.

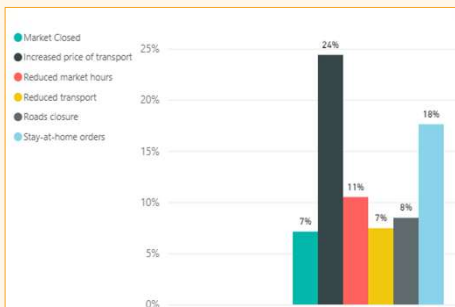
The survey results are not intended to be representative at the country level but provide a snapshot of selected markets. The following data has been compiled from; Benin, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mali, Malawi, Niger, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Guatemala. Each program began at a different time since July 2020 and collected different numbers of surveys. Survey values are equally weighed across countries. This sample includes 951 households, 753 vendors and 83 customs clearance and logistics agents.

RESULTS

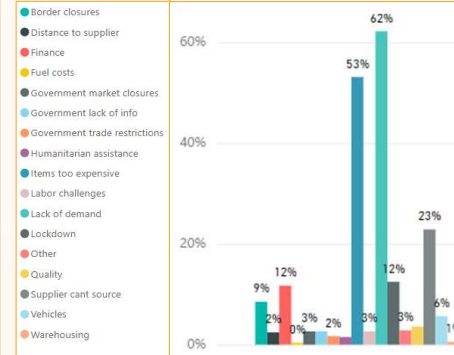
HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGE BETWEEN MONTHS



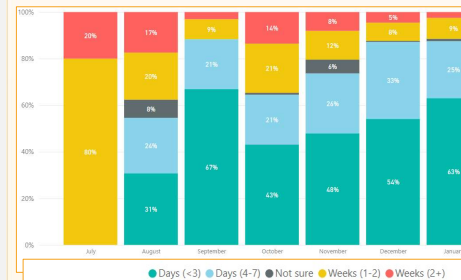
HOUSHOLDS' TOP CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING MARKETS



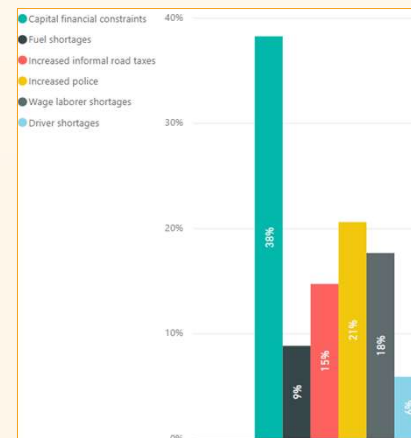
VENDORS' TOP CHALLENGES



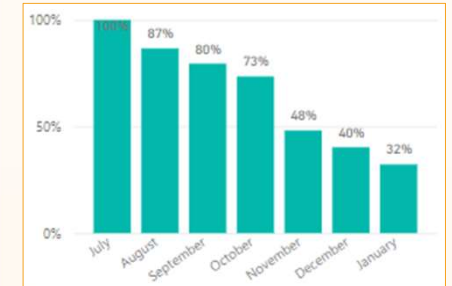
VENDORS' AVERAGE TIME TO RESTOCK



COMMON CONTRAINTS FOR FREIGHT FORWARDERS



VENDORS EXPERIENCING MORE CHALLENGES THAN BEFORE COVID-19



CONCLUSION

While the results are not representative at the country level, they do provide some valuable insights into shared challenges across surveyed markets.

It is difficult to differentiate the impacts of COVID-19 and other crises, such as the conflict in Northern Ethiopia or hurricanes in Guatemala. While challenges relating to border closures, stay-at-home orders and increased police presence are more easily attributable to the pandemic, capital financial constraints and increased cost to vendors and households are likely ongoing challenges, regardless of the pandemic.

Many indicators show gradual improvement since July, such as decreases in amount of time it takes vendors to restock and vendor challenges compared to before COVID-19. Although promising, they show many significant and sustained challenges faced by all market actors. Household income is shown to have normalized slightly, however this may also point to an increased acceptance of lower income as a new standard. The price of transportation is reported to have increased in many countries resulting from travel restrictions, mandated social distancing, and a reduced number of transportation operators.

CRS's MSC monitoring system can be used to flag specific indicators of concern but understating their sources often requires further investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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