

# COVID-19: Impact on households well being monitoring

From September 1- 15 2021 The Gambia

Newsletter No 8. –October 2021



KEY MESSAGES

The share of the eligible but unvaccinated population declined from 83% in August to 64% in September 2021 driven by high uptake of the single-shot vaccine and increased vaccination among the under 60 years age-group.

The labor continues to be volatile indicating its high sensitivity to seasonality. Between August and September 2021, job losses increased from 9.6% to 14.9%. Similarly, the share of households who reported a decline in income increased from 57% in June 2021 to 67% in September 2021.

Access to basic services- especially health care and education; has been eased by the relaxation of lockdowns. However, financial constraints remains a major barrier to accessing markets affecting households' ability to stock up food (notably cereals) as usual.

46% of households were affected in some way by the recent windstorm in The Gambia on July 7 and 8, 2021. Coverage of social assistance following negative shocks remains low but targets the poorest households. The agricultural outlook is positive despite concerns about the late start of rains.

## METHODOLOGY



The results in this note were prepared using data from the wave 8 of the High Frequency Survey on the COVID-19 Impacts on Households in The Gambia. A sub-sample of 1095 households of the Labor Force Survey (LFS) were interviewed by phone between September 1<sup>st</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. These same households have already been interviewed during the previous 7 waves. The results are representative at the national level and at strata level (Banjul- the capital city; and Kanifing also an urban settlement around the capital city; other urban areas, and rural areas).

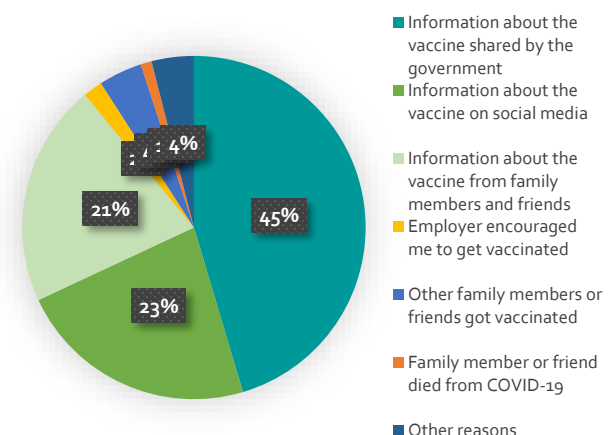
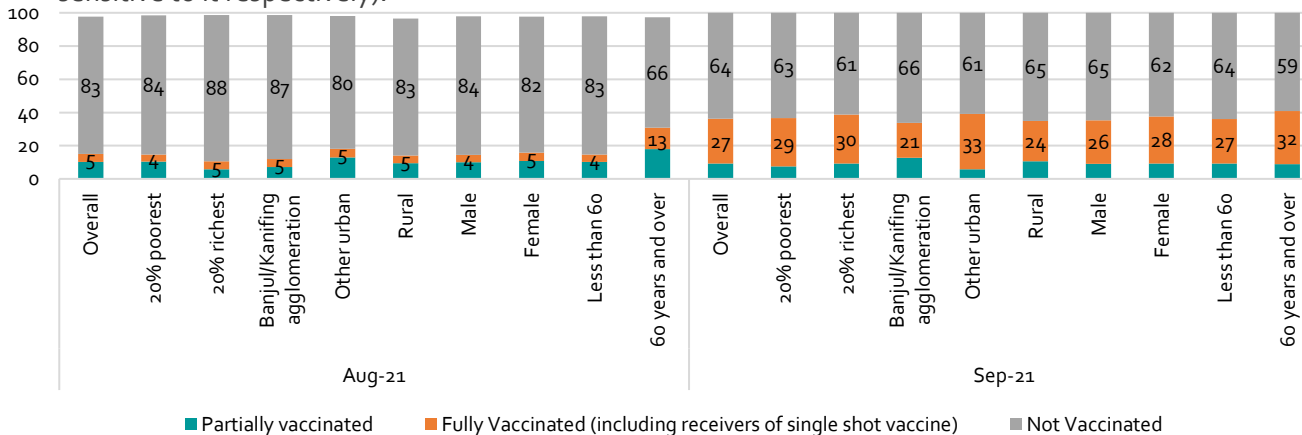
## Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases (the main reason for that is limited testing).



## COVID-19 & VACCINATION UPDATE

- Awareness of the COVID-19 virus remains high in The Gambia –as of in September 2021, 94% of household heads reported to be aware of the presence of the virus; and 95% agree that it is dangerous. However, households seem much less concerned than last month (82% very concerned in August versus 68% in September 2021; 17% somewhat concerned in August versus 28% in September 2021). This is further illustrated in the adoption of measures to minimize spread of the virus- between August and September 2021, the share of households who are washing hands with soap or sanitizer and avoiding large crowds declined from 74% to 68%; and from 29% to 21% respectively.
- Between August and September 2021, vaccination rates<sup>1</sup> against COVID-19 have improved. The share of the eligible but unvaccinated population declined from 83% in August to 64% in September 2021<sup>2</sup> driven by high uptake of the single shot vaccine and increased vaccination among the under 60 years age-group. Across welfare, space and gender, vaccination rates are lower among the poorest households relative to the richest; those living in Banjul/Kanifing and rural areas relative to those living in other urban areas; and males relative to females.
- Households' decision to be vaccinated seems to be more sensitive to the information they receive than to other motivating factors coming from their professional or family environment. Information from the government is the most likely to affect households' decision to be vaccinated (45% of households are sensitive to it), but information from the social media and from family and friends is far from negligible (23% and 21% of households are sensitive to it respectively).



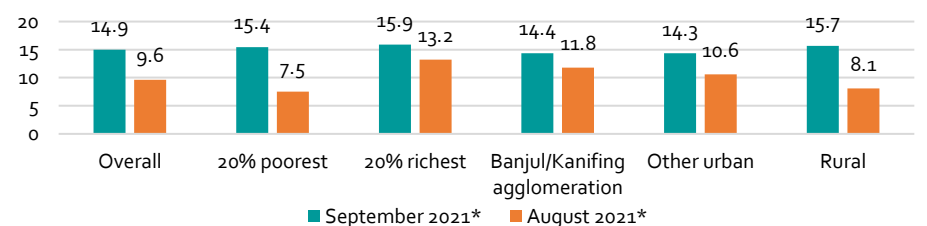
Graph 1: Individuals' vaccination status as of August and September 2021 (%)

Graph 2: Most influencing factor in household decision to take or not take the COVID-19 vaccine (%)



## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME LOSS

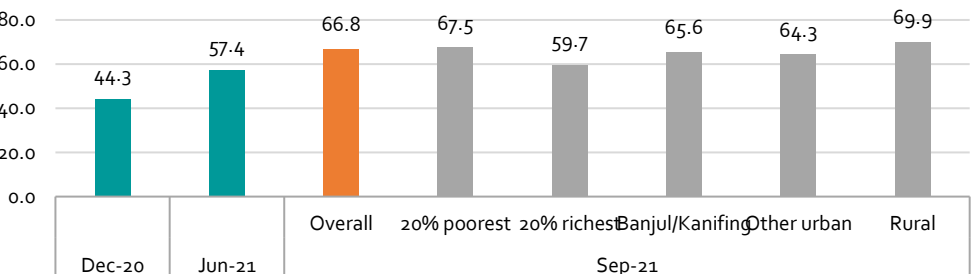
- Job losses (defined as individuals who were working before the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, but subsequently stopped working) remain volatile. Between June and August 2021, it declined from 21% to 9.6% attributed to the resumption of seasonal agricultural activity. However, in September 2021 job losses increased slightly to 14.9%. Temporal absence from work is the most cited reason for job loss-reported by 56% of individuals; reflecting the sensitivity of the labor market to seasonality. As was observed in August 2021, the agricultural sector continues to be an important driver of labor market activities employing more than 40% of active individuals in August and September 2021.



\* In September and August 2021, the employment section was administered to all members over 7 years instead of only heads.

Graph 3: People working before March 2020 but not working in August and September 2021 (%)

- Increased job losses are also reflected in income declines<sup>3</sup>. The share of households who reported income decline increased from 57% in June 2021 to 67% in September 2021. Income decline continues to be higher among the poorest and rural households.



Graph 4: Households who experienced income declines December 2020 – September 2021 (%)

1. Information about vaccination was asked about all eligible household members (18 years and over)

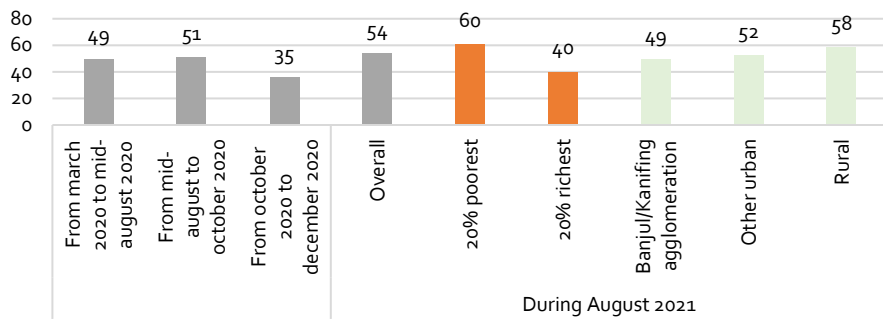
2. Official vaccination rates are lower than data from the survey. Possible explanations for the discrepancy could be measurement error in the survey and/or that the survey may also be capturing individuals who were vaccinated in neighboring countries such as Senegal and/or Guinea given the porous nature of the borders which may not be captured in the official statistics.

3. Income loss in this round of data collection refers to decline in household income in the previous 2 months; whereas in the previous rounds it considered income declines in the previous 12 months.

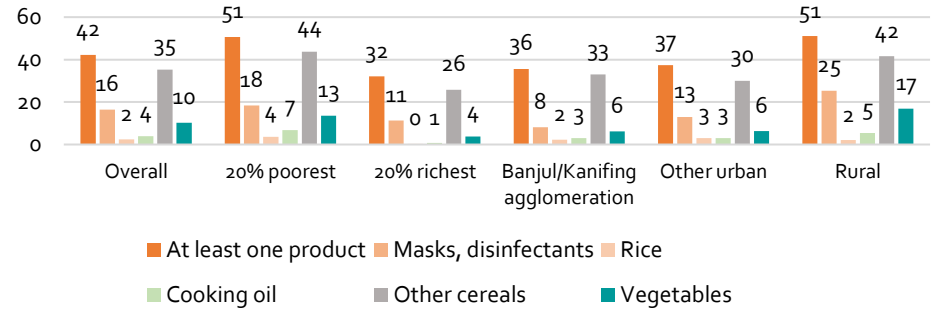


## ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

- Access to basic services- especially health care and education; has been eased by the relaxation of containment measures. However, financial constraints remains a major barrier to accessing basic services. In September 2021, 66% of households reported difficulties in honoring the payment of at least one service- notably repayment of loans (39%), internet (34%), electricity (32%), transport (26%) and water (26%).
- Ability to stock up food supplies as usual has deteriorated as reported by more than half of households (54%) compared to 35% in December 2020. Most of these households (89%), cite lack of financial resources as the main reason for their inability to stock up food. Further disaggregation shows that access to cereals remains a major issue for 35% of households- especially among the poorest (44%) and in rural areas (42%).



**Graph 5: Share of Households encountering difficulties to stock up food as usual since March 2020 (%)**



**Graph 6: Share of Household encountering difficulties to access basic commodities during August 2021 (%)**



## CLIMATE EVENTS AND AGRICULTURE

- Nearly half of all households (46%) were affected in some way by the recent windstorm in The Gambia on July 7 and 8, 2021. Overall, 74% of affected households suffered partial damage to their dwelling dwellings (destruction to roof or fence, etc.) and 24% suffered complete destruction of their dwelling.

- In addition to the windstorm, over the past two months (July-August), households have been confronted, overwhelmingly by rising food prices (72%). In response, households resorted to purchasing cheaper goods (42%), using savings (42%), relying on the help of family/friends (28%) and reducing consumption habits (23%).

- Although use of savings is less common among the poorest households (29%), other negative coping strategies with adverse consequences on households' ability to escape poverty are more widely used- obtaining credit (12%) and selling agricultural assets (9%). The use of these strategies exposes poor households to the risk of liquidity and/or poverty traps.

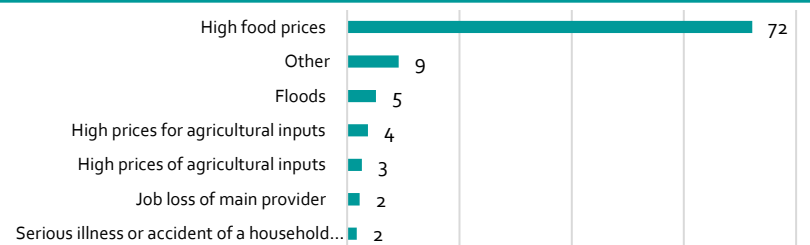
- The coverage of social assistance following a negative shocks is low- cash transfers and food aid reached 10.4% and 6.6% respectively of affected households. The provision of social assistance (especially cash transfers) following a negative shock is particularly concentrated among the poorest households- 12.4% and 11.9% of whom received cash transfers and food aid respectively. Across space, the provision of food aid is more common among households in the Banjul/Kanifing area (11.8%) whereas cash transfers are more common in rural areas (8.9%).

- The largest amount (self-reported) of social assistance was received by households in other urban areas (averaging GMD 4,937) and among the poorest households (GMD 4,860). Households in rural areas reported the lowest- GMD 3,707.

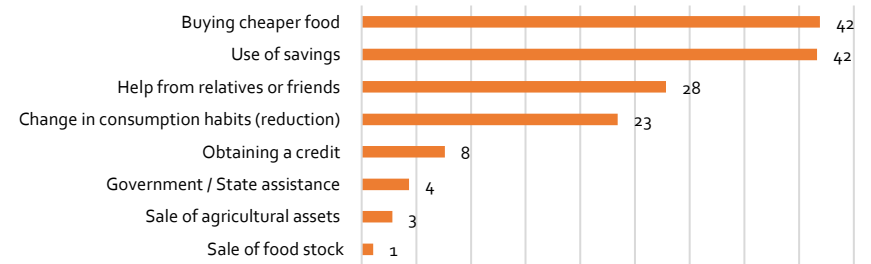
- Government continues to be the major source of social assistance following disaster events- providing assistance to 82.3% of recipients while neighbors provide 10.8%.

- Overall, 42% of households believe that the rainy season did not start normally this year, mainly because of heavy winds (44% of households), and delays (37%). However, the forecast for this year's harvest is generally positive (46% of households expect an above-average harvest and 41% expect an average/usual level of harvest). 12% of farming households anticipate below average level of harvests.

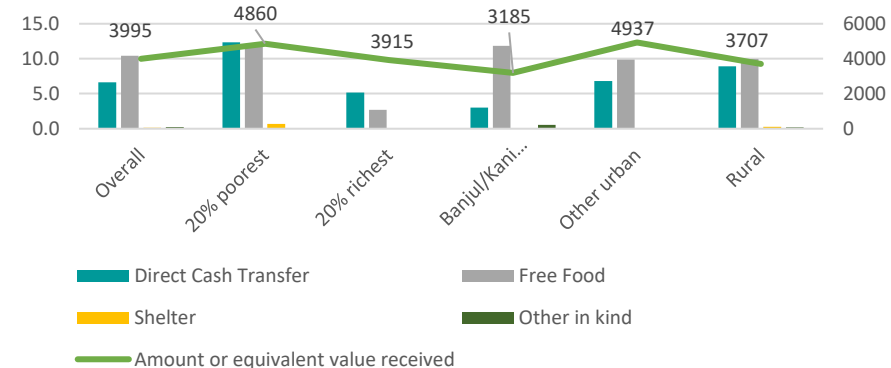
- The challenges faced by farmers during this agricultural season are very diverse, but are mostly concentrated around access to fertilizer, windstorms and access to farmland. The forms of support expected by farming households from the government and its development partners are as diverse as the challenges they face and include food aid (reported by 63% of households) and financial assistance (reported by 67% of households). To a lesser extent, households would like to receive assistance in acquiring agricultural inputs (34%), agricultural equipment (17%), investing in irrigation systems (9%).



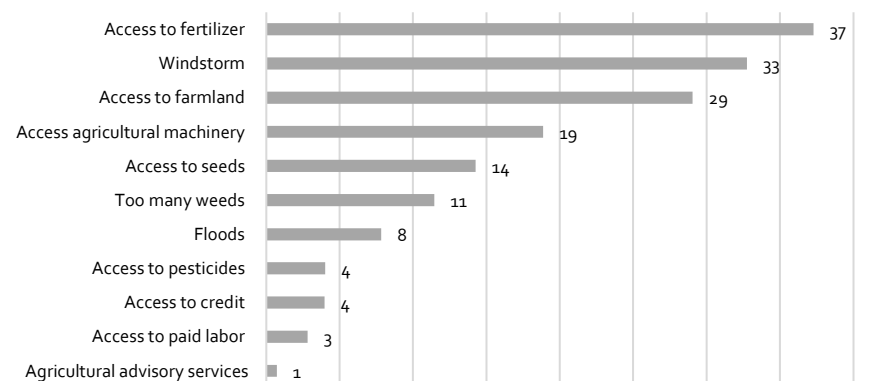
**Graph 7: Events affecting Households last 2 months in The Gambia apart from July windstorm (%)**



**Graph 8: Strategies adopted by households to cope with these events (%)**



**Graph 9: Receipt of Social Assistance following a negative shock in (%) and amount/equivalent value received in (GMD)**



**Graph 10: Biggest challenges for farming households this season (%)**

The bottom 20% or poorest households; and top 20% or richest households; are identified based on an asset index type of wealth distribution.



For further details, visit <https://www.gbosdata.org>

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