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August 2020

Nutrition and food security status and Covid-19 vulnerability in West Africa.

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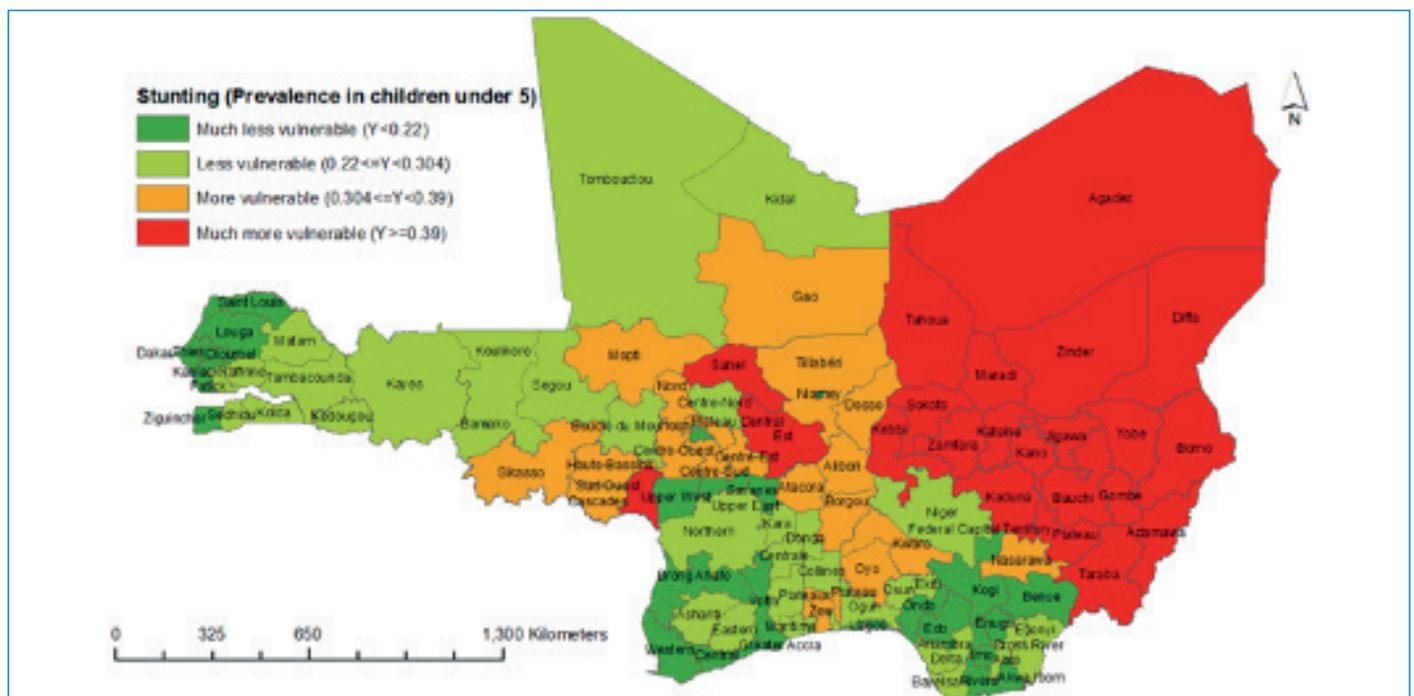
The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have both immediate and long-lasting effects on food security, with uneven impacts across regions and countries due to differences in underlying patterns of vulnerability. AKADEMIYA2063 is using its eAtlas platform with data from various sources to identify locations within countries where multiple dimensions of vulnerability intersect to put populations at particular risk for severe repercussions from shocks.

We define vulnerability as the likelihood of exposure to negative food security effects resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. We construct a composite vulnerability indicator for each subnational area examined, based

upon several indicators representing different dimensions of vulnerability. Each area is classified as “much less”, “less”, “more”, or “much more” vulnerable compared to the regional average. In this newsletter, we discuss vulnerability individual indicators related to food security and nutrition in eight West African countries.

Existing levels of malnutrition and food insecurity, represented by the prevalence of child stunting and average household food consumption expenditure per adult equivalent, provide a strong indication of vulnerability to severe impacts of food and health shocks. Households with alarming existing food and nutrition conditions are likely to have fewer resources to cushion themselves from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nutrition status and Covid-19 vulnerability

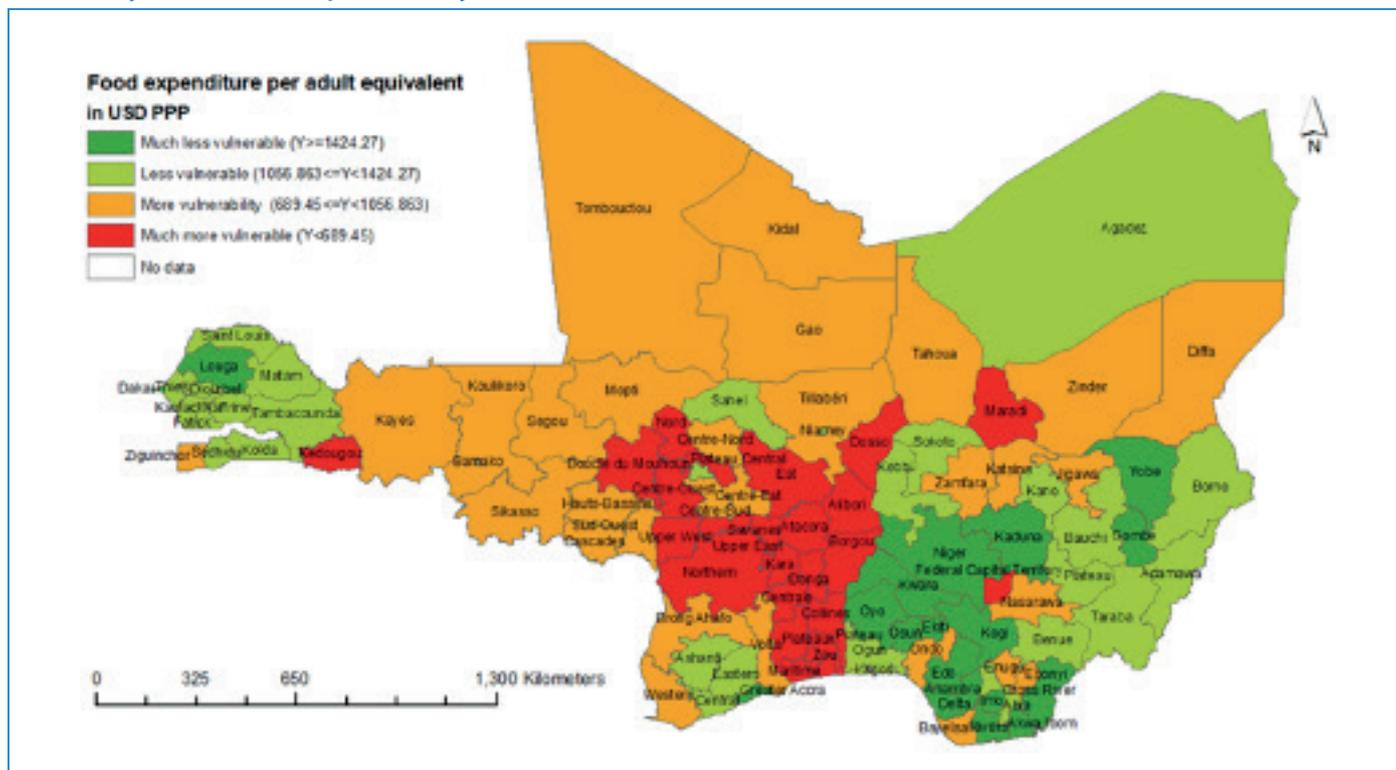


As shown in Figure 1, the highest child stunting rates among the West African countries examined are concentrated in Niger and northern Nigeria as well as several regions of Burkina Faso. The struggle against Boko Haram in the region is increasingly sharpening local conflicts over access to resources. Stunting rates are comparatively low in western Senegal and parts of Ghana and southern Nigeria. However, even in these areas, stunting exceeds the Malabo Declaration target for 2025 of 10 percent. In contrast, the areas with the highest food security vulnerability in terms of per capita food expenditures are Benin, Togo, eastern and central Burkina Faso, and northern Ghana, with pockets of high vulnerability in other countries, including the Kédougou region of Senegal, Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria, and the Maradi region of Niger.

Every area in Benin and Togo performs better on stunting than on food expenditure compared to the regional average, and every area in Mali, Senegal and Ghana either perform equally on the two indicators or have better rankings for stunting. In contrast, the majority of Nigerian states performed better on food expenditures than on stunting compared to the regional average. The relationship between food security and stunting is complex, and the causes of stunting are not geographically uniform. For example, the drivers of stunting have been shown to affect outcomes differently in northern Nigeria compared to the rest of the county.¹

Stunting as an indicator of longer term nutritional status and food expenditure as a reflection of current capacity to cover nutritional needs both have significant implications

Food security status and Covid-19 vulnerability



Note: USD PPP – United States dollars, purchasing power parity

The geographic patterns of the two indicators differ to a striking extent. Only two locations—Maradi region in Niger and Est region in Burkina Faso—are classified as much more vulnerable than the regional average on both indicators. Ten areas, all in Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal, are much less vulnerable than average on both indicators. All other locations have varying performance with respect to stunting and food expenditure.

in terms the extent of the consequences faced by local communities should the pandemic reach their shores. This needs to be reflected in possible interventions by governments and other actors fighting the pandemic and its impact on vulnerable populations.

¹ Amare, M., T. Benson, O. Fadare, and M. Oyeyemi. 2017. Study of the Determinants of Chronic Malnutrition in Northern Nigeria: Quantitative Evidence from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys. IFPRI Nigeria Strategy Support Program Working Paper 45. Abuja: International Food Policy Research Institute.



AKADEMIYA2063 is grateful to USAID for funding for this work through a Feed the Future grant with Policy LINK. Any opinions stated here are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily representative of or endorsed by AKADEMIYA2063.