

Republic of the Marshall Islands  
**Household Rapid Vulnerability Assessment**  
Ebeye and Gugeegue -Preliminary Report



July 11, 2020



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## Forward

Iakwe kom aolep,


On behalf of the Office of the Chief Secretary and the National Disaster Committee (NDC) I am pleased to present to you the RMI Ebeye and Gugeegue Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) Preliminary Report July 2020. The RVA was implemented and written as a baseline for understanding the vulnerabilities of households to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The RVA provides an evidence base for progress regarding the RMI preparedness and response to COVID-19 and will be utilized by the National Emergency Operations Centre's Cluster to target interventions and for NDC to make sound decisions.

This RVA Preliminary Report is one of a series of RVA reports that will be published by the NDC. Its contents are meant to provide an overall picture of the challenges faced by households in our communities and to provide a snapshot of the current situation for partners. Additional analysis on data will continue to be done as required per Cluster as required.

Together we have the capability to prepare our communities and reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread in the RMI.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kino Kabua', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kino Kabua

Chief Secretary

## Acknowledgements

The rapid assessment was designed and implemented under the leadership of the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC), in partnership with the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster and the Gender & Protection Cluster. Funding for the implementation came from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through a USAID project.

The rapid assessment would not have been possible without the technical assistance members of the NEOC and clusters including the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Ebeye Water and Sewer Company (MWSC), Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO), Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs (MOCIA) and IOM. The rapid assessment team was led by IOM staff Ann Chong Gum, Ramos Momotaro, Tyler Uwaine, and Sonia Tagoilelagi, and enumerators Milson Jeadrik, Riem John, Bryan Toka, Robert Tibon, John deBrum, Konelila Tagoilelagi, Yoleen Laimo, Lily Capelle, Tanya Patrick and Sepe Sawej.

Report editors include IOM Head of Sub Office Angela Saunders and Karina de Brum of MOCIA.

## Acronyms

EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPPSO	Economic Policy and Planning Statistics Office
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Center
MOCIA	Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs
MWSC	Majuro Water and Sewer Company
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Cluster)
ADB	Asia Development Bank
DFAT	(Australia) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Part 1: Methodology

**Objective:** to conduct a rapid assessment of all households in Ebeye and Gugeegue on COVID-19 vulnerability utilizing a GPS enabled online assessment tool. The assessment looked at the thematic areas of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), economic impact, protection, communications, transportation, and food security. The assessment results provide a snapshot of the vulnerability at a household level. A more detailed assessment utilizing the GPS coordinates of the identified “most vulnerable” households will follow to further priority interventions by sector as required.

**Partners:** the rapid assessment is being implemented by the NEOC through partnership of WASH cluster and Gender & Protection Cluster, as well as technical assistance from EPPSO.

**Enumerators:** in support of the NEOC, IOM had 10 volunteer enumerators, 2 enumerators on hourly contracts and 2 IOM staff supporting them. The enumerators were organized into 3 different teams of 2-3 people with a team leader. The enumerators participated in 2 days of training and were sworn in by Community Judge Davidson Riklon.

**Assessment tool:** the assessment tool is an app, Akvo Flow for smart phones or tablets. The assessment tool required internet and GPS access. IOM provided each assessment team with a wifi box for internet access. The assessment included consent of participants, details of which were coordinated with EPPSO’s best practices. The assessment questions are provided in **Annex 1**.

**Transportation:** Enumerators usually took a taxi or walked from home to the designated site in Ebeye on a daily basis. Lunch for enumerators was provided by the NDMO.

**Analysis:** The WASH Cluster, EPPSO, and Gender & Protection Cluster have analysed the results and presented to the NEOC.

**Communication/announcement:** IOM and NEOC provided community announcements to ensure that community members are aware of the rapid assessment and prepared to participate.

### Methodology

The methodology of implementation is that assessment teams followed the zones of Ebeye provided by EPPSO, with each team taking a zone starting from Gugeegue first, and then from *Mokan Rok* at the opposite side of the island, going back towards Gugeegue. The teams worked house to house either as individuals or in pairs to conduct the assessment which took 15-20 minutes per household. The teams provided a background on the purpose of the assessment, if consent was given they would proceed with the interview. After completion of the assessment the teams used tape to mark the door with the team number to signify the household as having completed the assessment. The teams also provided the home with a handout “Preparing the Your Home for COVID-19” and a contact sheet of where to get information on COVID-19 in the Marshall Islands.

### Limitations

Key challenges for the implementation of the survey include dogs that prevented entry onto the land, no one at home during working hours and bad weather. To address the problems the teams returned to areas where homes were missed during weekends to gather information. At the time of writing this preliminary report not all homes in Ebeye and Gugeegue had been assessed. A small team will continue to schedule meetings with the households that were missed and a supplemental report will be written.

## Definitions

Running water: is when you have a tap (including from a kitchen sink, from tank) that you can wash your hands with – i.e. the water has to run out of the faucet, not being sitting or stagnant. This means, if a household only has barrels or are using buckets and cups to wash their hands this does not count as a tap in the kitchen or from a tap on a tank.

Dependent: a person who cannot take care of themselves and is dependent on another for care – for example a baby who needs to be fed or an elderly person who cannot get to the shower on their own, or family members who are not employed and dependent on another family member for care.

Household: a household refers to a group of people, and not to physical structure they live in. Generally speaking, for survey purposes, a household is a group of people who pool their money together and cook and eat together. Often a household is very similar to a family, but the people comprising a household don't have to be related.

Dwelling: means any building or structure, whether permanent or temporary, which is wholly or partly used for human habitation; so a dwelling usually refers to the physical structure in which a person/s resides. This type of structure may vary considerably, and includes:

- Single structure units; or
- Block of apartment units; or
- Small dwelling unit attached to a shop.

Employment: retirees do not classify as employed

Most Vulnerable Households: the most vulnerable households are those that fit a 5 or more of the below criteria.

- a) 10 or more people in a household members
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## Part 3: Results

This part of the report will provide analysis in two sections. Section 1 – Key Demographics contains basic answers per question in totals. Section 2 – Vulnerability Analysis contains cross tabulated information to identify most vulnerable homes. A total of 772 households were included, with 18 households declining to participate and 754 participating.

The results were analysed as totals.

## Section 1 – Key demographics

### Section 1.1 Household size and dependents

The average household size in Ebeye and Gugeegue is 9.19 as shown in Table 1 below. The number of dependents is defined as those in the home that are not working and would not be able to support themselves if the person(s) employed were no there. The total number of households with 5 or more dependents is 449 or 58% of all homes surveyed.

Number of persons	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31+ persons
Total Households	218	334	138	43	24	15

Table 1 Household size

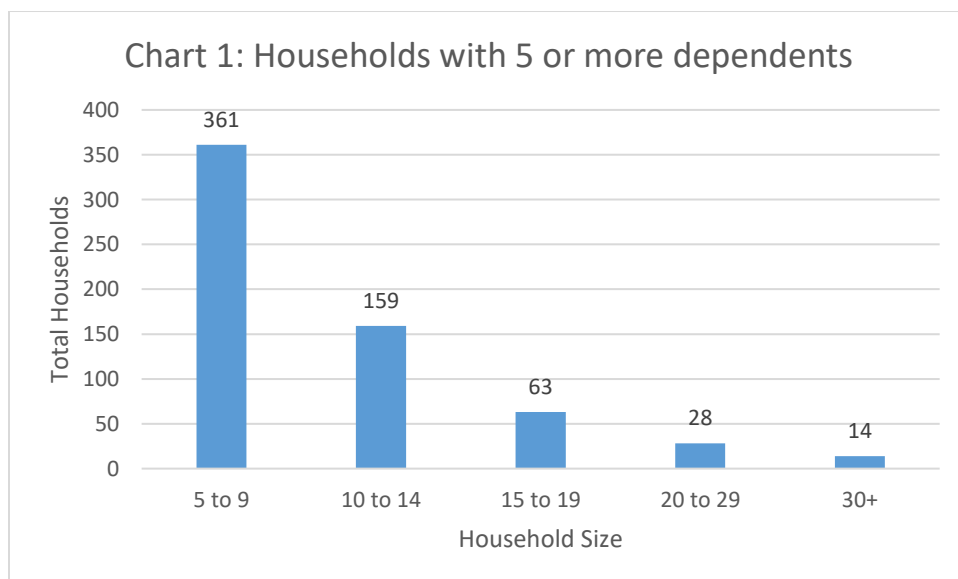
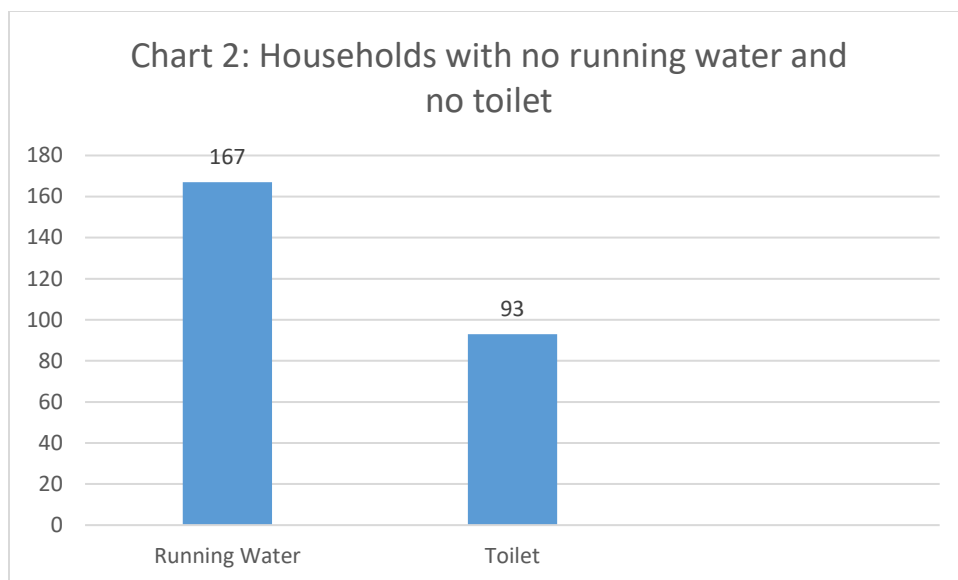


Chart 1 Households by with 5 or more Dependents

The total number of households with 5 or more dependents is 449.

### Section 1.2 WASH

Below are the WASH results for the total number of households that have no access to running water and no access to a toilet. The enumerators explained the definition of running water to households to ensure that households understood “running water” was *not* equivalent to access to city water.



*Chart 2 Number of households with no running water and no toilet*

Many answers were dependent on the Ebeye Water and Sewer project funded by ADB and Australia DFAT and the hopes that houses would be connected by the end of July or early August.

The total number of households with no access to running water is 167 or 22% of households surveyed.

The total number of households with no access to a toilet is 93 or 12% of households surveyed.

### Section 1.3 Employment

While some households had no one employed, others had 5 or more. The average employment rate by household is 1.99.

The below results articulate the total number of households that have someone who has either lost their job due to COVID-19, had a family member seen the reduction of hours due to COVID-19 or has a family member caught off the island and is no longer able to work. The total number of households impacted by COVID-19 is 11.



Chart 3: Lost jobs, hours or income earner stranded due to COVID-19

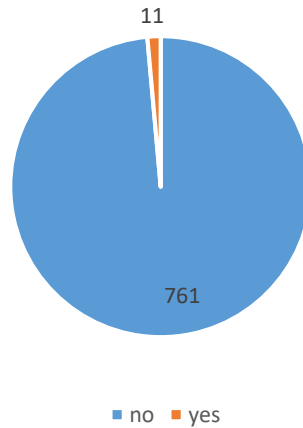


Chart 3 Households experiencing lost jobs, hours or income earner stranded due to COVID-19

The total number of households that indicated negative financial impacted due to COVID-19 is 11.

#### Section 1.4 Communications

There were 5 questions asked on the available types of communications at a household level: AM/FM radio, cell phones, landline phone, landline internet, and 4G (sim card). Of the 772 households that completed the assessment, there were varying degrees of access to communication types. The most used communications means is a cell phone and the least accessed is landline phones. AM/FM radios, especially the state-owned station V7AB is one of the main means of communications for emergency messaging (in addition to mass text), but only 26% of homes have a working radio AM/FM radio.

Chart 4: Access to Communications

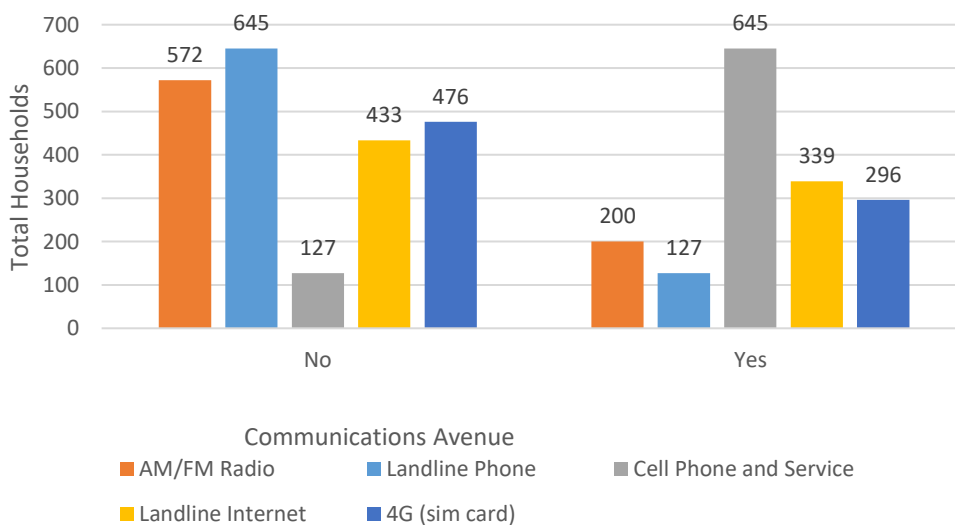


Chart 4 Access to Communications

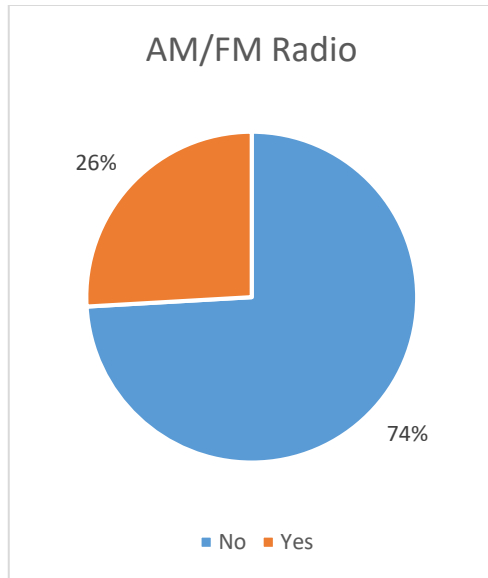


Figure 1 Access to AM/FM Radio

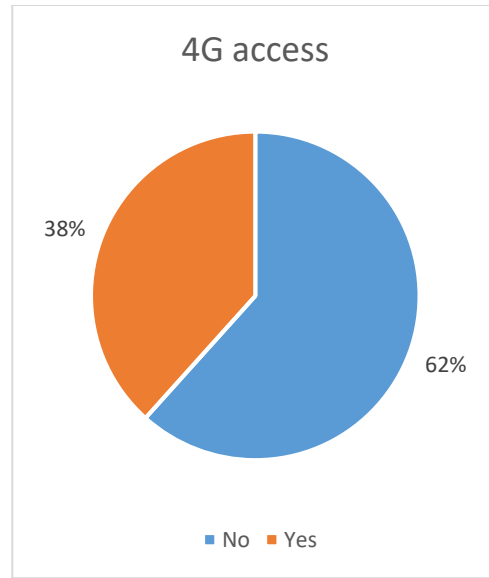


Figure 2 Access to 4G

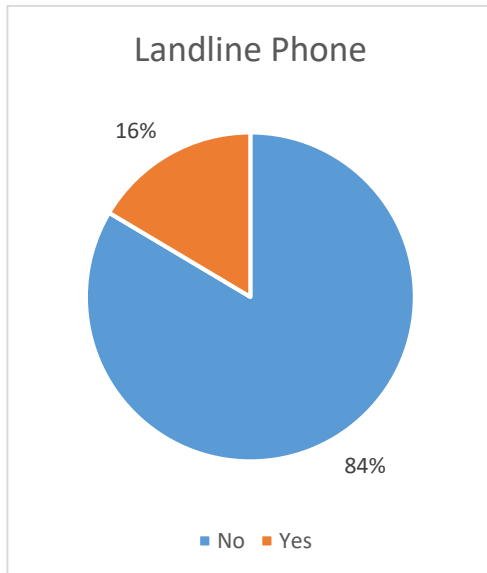


Figure 3 Access to landline phone

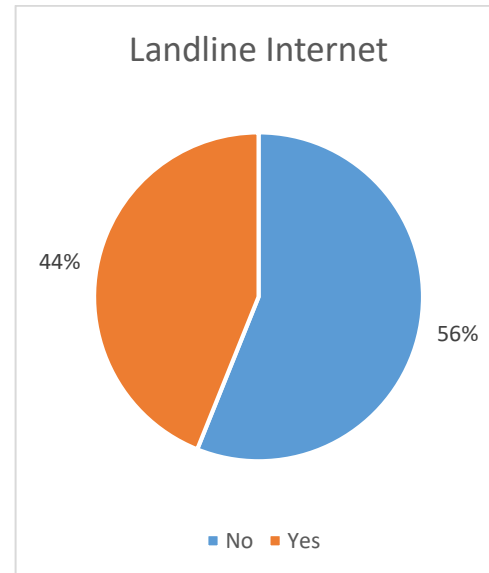


Figure 4 Access to Internet (landline)

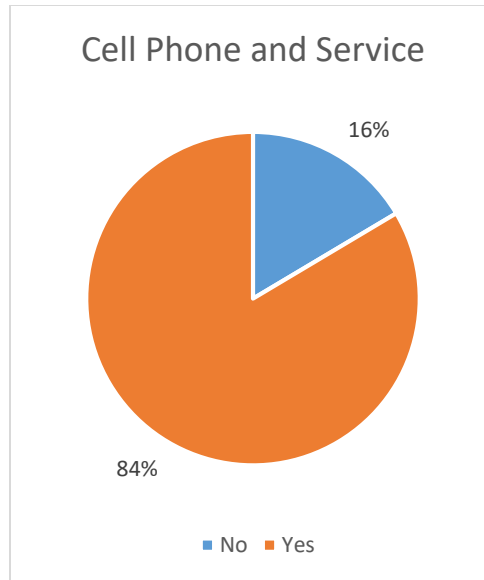


Figure 5 Access to cell phone

### Section 1.5 Food Security

When asked about food security and the number of days of food available in the home it was a challenge for the home to estimate. Households noted that they usually buy food supplies on a 2 week cycle with pay checks. Enumerators noted that many households in Ebeye were holding off on food purchasing until condition orange. Additionally, physical food storage was a larger concern for Ebeye households. Only a few households had started stockpiling food supplies, mostly rice and flour, for COVID-19 preparedness.



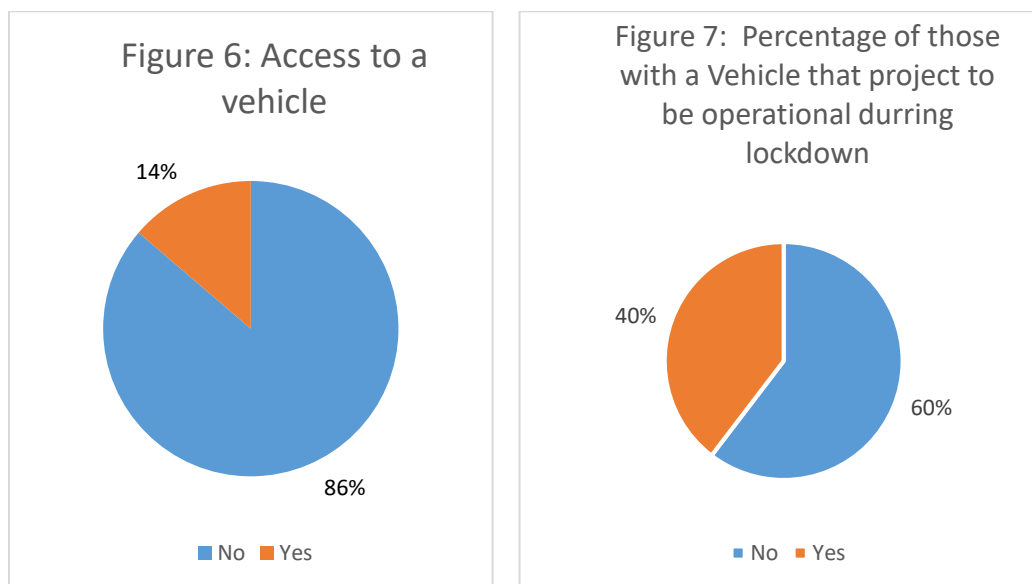
Chart 5 Number of days of food supply available

The most common number of days that a household has food available for is more than 14 days. 63% of households have 6+ days of food supply available.

### Section 1.6 Transportation

Access to transportation during an outbreak of COVID-19 is essential for households to access essential services (where lockdown will be enforced). 86% of households do not have no access to vehicle. During

non-lockdown times 14% of households have access to transportation. Only 5.6% of all Ebeye households will have access to a vehicle and fuel during a lockdown situation. Below is a chart of household projected access to transportation.



Figures 6-7 Transportation

The total number of households who currently have no access to vehicles is 666. The total number of households projecting no access to reliable transportation during lockdown is 730.

### Section 1.7 Health

One question on the rapid assessment asked questions about the health of household members at the request of the Ministry of Health and Human Services (MOHHS) to identify COVID-19 vulnerable populations. Households were asked if there was a member of the home that has been diagnosed with cancer, with a total of 24 households reporting yes. Additional information was gathered but is kept confidential and shared only with appropriate health professionals. Queries about overall health and the prevalence of NDCS (non-communicable diseases) were not asked because the MOHHS was already operating under impression of NDCs and poor health conditions being a wide spread concern.

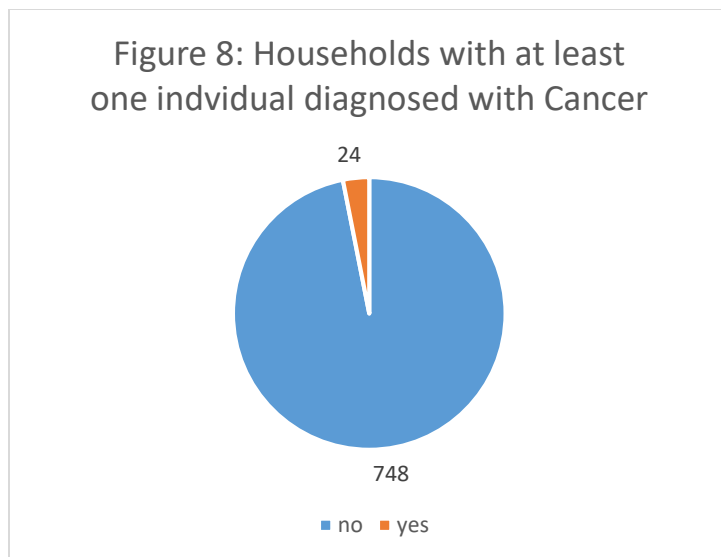


Figure 8 Number of households with at least 1 individual diagnosed with cancer

The total number of households identifying at least 1 individual diagnosed with cancer is 24.

## Section 2 – Vulnerability Analysis

A further series of questions were asked to determine how many households met several criteria (to assess vulnerability levels). Across 7 Vulnerability Assessments the highest number of vulnerable households was at Assessment 4 while Assessments 1, 3, 5 and 7 ranked lowest at 10 households (varying cases).

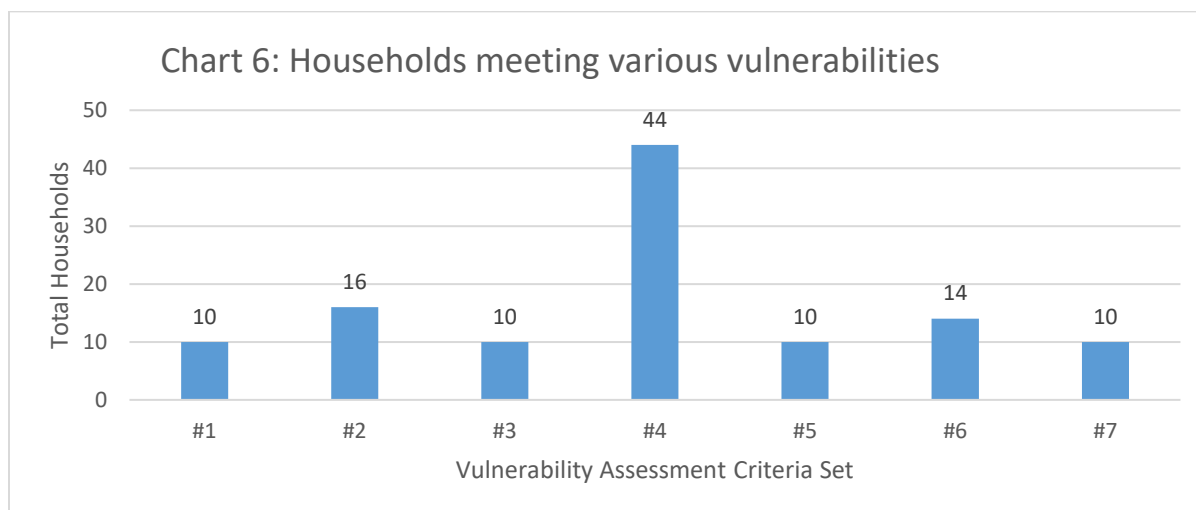


Chart 6 Number of households meeting the 7 Vulnerability Assessments

### 2.1 Vulnerability Assessment #1

Vulnerability Assessment #1 - all criteria met. This is the most restrictive Assessment that was run. The total number of households is 10.

- a) 10 or more people in the household
- b) 2 or less persons employed

- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## 2.2 Vulnerability Assessment #2

Vulnerability Assessment #2 – excluding criteria ‘a’. The total number of households is 16.

- a) 10 or more people in the household**
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## 2.3 Vulnerability Assessment #3

Vulnerability Assessment #3 – excluding criteria ‘d’. The total number of households is 10.

- a) 10 or more people in the household
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent**
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## 2.4 Vulnerability Assessment #4

Vulnerability Assessment #4 – excluding criteria ‘a’ or ‘d’. The total number of households is 44. This is the highest frequency of vulnerability in this assessment.

- a) 10 or more people in the household**
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent**
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## 2.5 Vulnerability Assessment #5

Vulnerability Assessment #5 – excluding criteria ‘e’. The total number of households is 10.

- a) 10 or more people in the household
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent
- e) 2 or less means of communication**

- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## 2.6 Vulnerability Assessment #6

Vulnerability assessment #6 – excluding criteria ‘f’. The total number of households is 14.

- a) 10 or more people in the household
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available**
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown

## 2.7 Vulnerability Assessment #7

Vulnerability assessment #7 – excluding criteria ‘g’. When criteria g is excluded from the above scenarios there is little to no change.

- a) 10 or more people in the household
- b) 2 or less persons employed
- c) No access to running water
- d) 5 or more people dependent
- e) 2 or less means of communication
- f) 5 or less days of food available
- g) No access to vehicle in lockdown**

## Section 3 – Observations

On June 23, 2020 the enumerators held a debrief session with design team members to share observations during the rapid assessment. Key observations related to the rapid assessment questions that were captured include:

- There are a lot of homes that need their catchments to be repaired or have broken faucets. Many households are sharing the same catchment.
- Many people are sharing a toilet with one or more households, and that many of these need to be bucket flushed and aren’t working properly. In addition to this, the salt water for flushing the toilets in many households would not work properly or not work at all at times, causing problems for the households that are experiencing this situation.
- Oftentimes, households living in a group will share food with most of them estimating to run out in 2 days if they share with extended family.
- Some people are listening to V7AB (AM/FM radio) but online through radio stations, or in their cars or when they are in taxis.
- Some people have cell phones, but they don’t have access to NTA services all the time and will use them for connection to the internet (often times people have phones, but they are locked still and not able to be utilized with SIM).
- In Block 9 Dump zone, there was a building designated as a community bathroom that had only a few bathroom stalls that were still functional. Most houses in this area do not have bathrooms,

but there is currently a project to build one for each household. Also in this same zone, there are pipes for running water currently being worked on to provide water for each households. Many households have already been hooked up, but there are also many that are not working yet.

- V7AB does not connect well with many households in Ebeye, and a way around that for those households is to listen to V7AB online through internet. There are households that don't have either the device, internet or both in order to listen online.
- When there are multiple families living in one unit, it becomes difficult for enumerators to differentiate them as separate households or just one household. The different families asked if the enumerators are assessing them by their electric meters (because sometimes, different families have different meters in the same unit). They eat together but have different meters.
- Regarding the food security question, there were households that felt conscious or uncomfortable sharing information about their current food stocks.
- In most households, the number of unemployed people exceeded the number of employed persons.

Other observations, concerns and questions that were raised.

- Enumerators ensured not to raise expectations on what goods would be delivered. People did demonstrate survey fatigue and would ask "is something actually going to happen this time". A few people did not want to be surveyed because they said that nothing happened after the dengue fever survey.
- There were questions on what the government plan is to care for homeless and those with mental health issues.
- Enumerators were asked if there is any financial aid for those who are stuck in the mainland?
- A lot of respondents agree with the decision of the government to close the borders (land and seaport). And to keep closed. Not many raised concerns specifically about Kwajalein entry.
- There was a request/questions on why other health issues were not included in the questionnaire.
- There were questions on visa renewal and overstay status for migrant populations.
- People wanted to know if they would get masks and gloves.
- Suggestions for future survey to include more specific information on persons with disabilities.
- There were difficulties when collecting the geo-locations of the households due to connection issues.
- Some enumerators answered yes to the toilet facility question when the households said that they use buckets to flush. Other enumerators answered no to the same answer.
- The Akvo Flow surveying app is currently incompatible with iPhones, which most of the Ebeye enumerators have, causing a shortage in devices being used to do assessments.
- There were households that had more than 30 members living in it.

## Part 4: Recommendations

The key recommendations below are to be more prepared for and prevent the possible outbreak of COVID-19 in Ebeye and Gugeegue.

- 1) Procure and distributed household WASH kits to the most vulnerable households to address WASH needs.



- 2) Conduct follow up detailed assessment for vulnerable homes with no running water to make repairs necessary for adequate handwashing.
- 3) Procure and distribute dignity kits to women and girls living in vulnerable households.
- 4) Gender & Protection Cluster to conduct further data analysis and prepare follow up detailed assessment for targeted vulnerable households.
- 5) Procure and distribute AM/FM radios to vulnerable households to ensure information dissemination in lockdown.
- 6) Allow taxi's to operate as an essential service during lockdown and provide subsidies to taxi drivers to ensure that taxis are available for residents to reach essential services such as NTA, grocery stores and KAJUR.
- 7) Consider allowing free internet and phone during lockdown to ensue effective communications and free hotlines for essential services.
- 8) Ministry of Health and Human Services to follow up with households that have been diagnosed with cancer to prepare an individual plan for care during COVID-19.
- 9) Prepare food basket for vulnerable homes to be distributed after two weeks of Condition 2&1.

## Part 5: Conclusion

The rapid assessment has been conducted and analysed to provide a snapshot of household level needs for residents of Ebeye and Gugeegue in a COVID-19 context. This includes basic household demographics, WASH, economic impacts, communications, food supplies, transportation, and medical. Based on the results 9 key recommendations are provided for immediate action regarding COVID-19 preparedness.

## Annex 1: Rapid Assessment Form

### Consent Form

1. Yes
2. No

### General Information

1. Name of person Doing the activity (Surveyor name)
2. Name of owner of the house (Household name)

### Beneficiary Information:

1. Number of people in the household (Number of people in the house)
2. Number of boys below the age of 5 (Boys below 5 years old)
3. Number of girls below the age of 5 (Girls below 5 years old)

### Household information

1. How many people in the home are currently employed? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5+ (Currently employed people)
2. Availability of running water? (Running water available)
3. Availability of toilet? (Toilet facility available)
4. Has anyone in your home lost their job or seen reduced hours due to COVID-19? Yes or no (Lost job)
5. How many people in your home are completely or almost completely dependent on a full time caregiver? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5+ (Dependent on caregiver)
6. Yes or no questions
  - a. Do you have a working AM/FM radio? Yes or no (Working FM.AM radio)
  - b. Do you have a working land line phone in your home? Yes or no (Working landline phone)
  - c. Do you have a working cell phone and service in your home? Yes or no (Working cellphone)
  - d. Do you have working land line internet access in your home? Yes or no (Working internet access)
  - e. Do you have working 4G access in your home? Yes or no (Working 4G access)
7. How long will your current food stocks in your home last (if you don't buy anything new) (choose one). 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6-8 days, 9-11 days, 11-14 days, 14+ days (Current food stocks)
8. Do you have access to your own vehicle for transportation? Yes or No (Access to own vehicle)

- a. If yes, do you envision affording to operate your vehicle if you lose your job due to COVID-19? **Yes or no** (Vehicle operation after losing job)

**9. Health questions**

- 10. 1. Have you been diagnosed to have Cancer? (Diagnosed with cancer)
- 11. 2. Are you on medications? (On medication)
- 12. 3. If yes, what is the name? (What medication)
- 13. 4. Contact information; telephone, email, social media name. (Telephone, Email, Social media ID)