



# How to conduct a food security assessment

A step-by-step guide for National Societies in Africa



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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FEWS</b>	Famine early warning system
<b>FS</b>	Food security
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>International Federation</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>MUAC</b>	Mid-upper-arm circumference
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PLWHA</b>	People living with HIV/AIDS
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization





Yoshi Shimizu/International Federation

# 1 Introduction

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Introduction

## Who is this guide for?

In 2003 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies adopted the *Policy on Food Security and Nutrition* in which it encouraged National Societies to conduct food security assessments. This guide is intended for National Society staff and volunteers in Africa who want to undertake food security assessments, but have no background knowledge on food security or assessments.

### *International Federation 2003 Policy on Food Security and Nutrition\**

The International Federation and each National Society shall undertake food security assessment and analysis that demonstrates an **understanding of how affected populations normally secure food**, the **risks**, the **causes** and **impact** of disasters on the immediate and future food security and the most appropriate responses to address both transient (acute) food insecurity and longer-term (chronic) food insecurity, **through recognizing and supporting household coping mechanisms**.

\*Adopted by the 8th Session of the Governing Board in Geneva, 21-23 October 2003 (reference 6)

## When to use this guide

A food security assessment may be required when living conditions in an area/country change, and it is expected that communities are becoming vulnerable and/or are no longer able to meet their nutritional needs. This can arise prior to or during a sudden hazard or when generally the situation becomes alarming slowly but consistently; including in case of drought, floods, locust infestation, outbreak of conflict/war, influx of refugees and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

## How to use this guide

This guide should be used as a **practical tool** to undertake an initial food security assessment. It goes through the different stages of a food security assessment, and provides techniques and examples of how to perform a food security assessment. The guide can be used both in rural or urban settings.

Throughout this guide you will see boxes with definitions relating to food assessments and tips for conducting food assessments. Much of the information in these boxes is drawn from documents listed in the References section of this guide. The reference number in the box relates to the document in the References section with the same number.

If you would like to do further reading on food assessments, these references are an excellent source of additional information. Also, the International Federation would like to credit and thank these and other organizations for making the information available to the wider aid community.

Other relevant food security and assessment materials are developed by the International Federation and available for use:

- Food Security training modules. International Federation, 2006.
- Guidelines for Emergency Assessment. International Federation, 2005.
- Food Security case studies. International Federation, 2003 and 2004.
- Project Planning Process handbook. International Federation, 2002.
- Better Programming Initiative, options to improve the impact of programmes. International Federation, 2002.
- Disaster Preparedness training manual. International Federation, 2001.
- Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment, an International Federation guide. International Federation, 1999.







## 2 What is food security?

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What is food security?

The definition of food security is based on three important pillars:

- food *availability*;
- food *access*; and
- food *utilization*.

**Food availability** in a country, region or local area means that food is physically present because it has been grown, manufactured, imported and/or transported there. For example: food is available because it can be found on markets, because it is produced on local farms, land or home gardens, or because it arrives as part of food aid, etc. This is food that is visible and in the area.

**Food access** is the way different people can obtain the available food. Normally we access food through a combination of home production, stocks, purchase, barter, gifts, borrowing or food aid. Food access is ensured when communities and households and all individuals within them have adequate resources, such as money, to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Access depends on income available to the household, on the distribution of income within the household and on the price of food. It also depends on market, social and institutional entitlement/rights to which individuals have access.

Food access can be negatively influenced by physical insecurity such as conflict, loss of coping options, such as border closure preventing seasonal job migration, or the collapse of safety net institutions that once protected people with low incomes.

**Food utilization** is the way people use the food and is dependent on the quality of the food, its preparation and storage method, nutritional knowledge, as well as on the health status of the individual consuming the food. Certain diseases do not allow for the maximum absorption of nutrients and growth requires increased intake of certain nutrients.

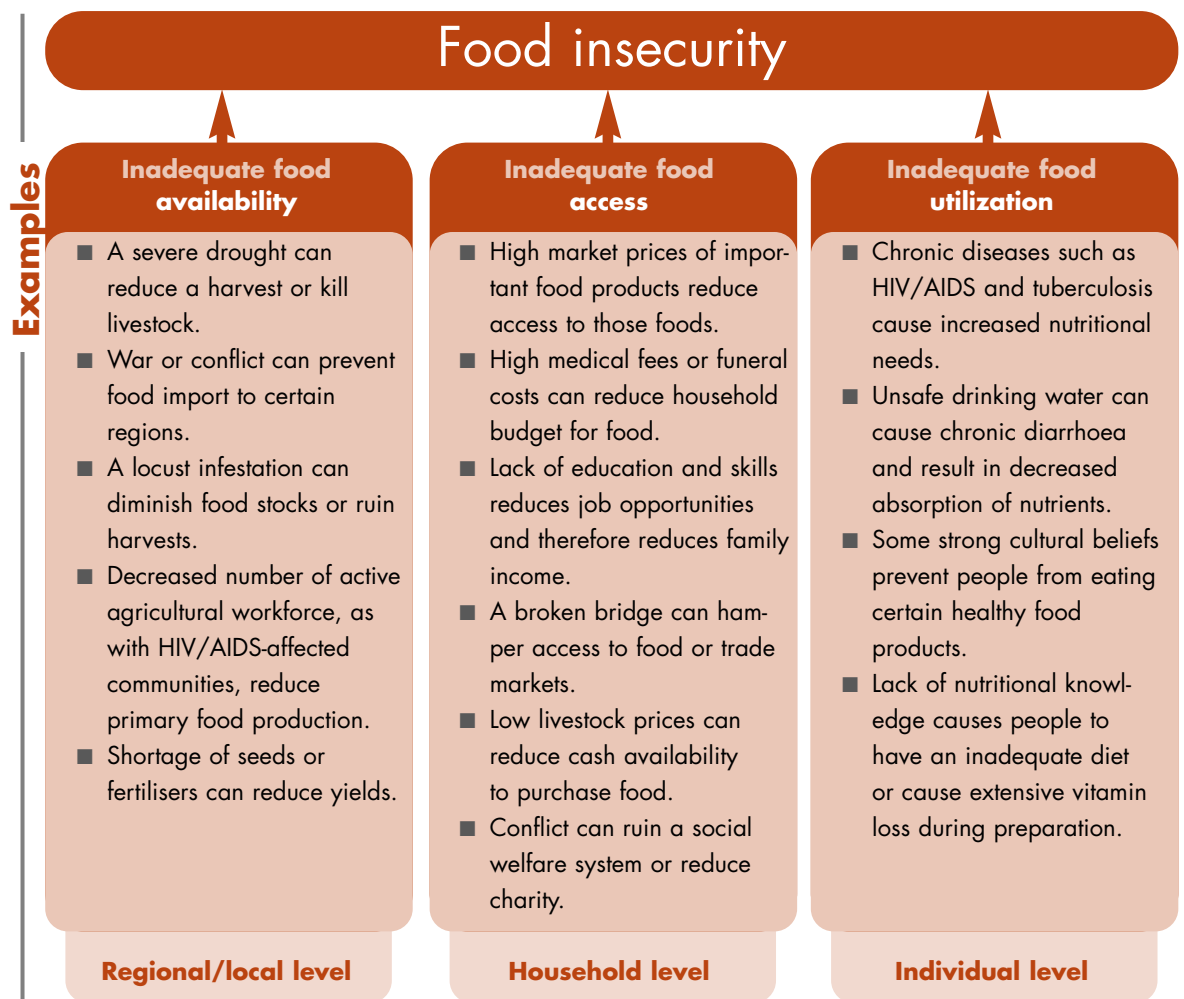
Food utilization is often reduced by endemic disease, poor sanitation, lack of appropriate nutrition knowledge or culturally prescribed taboos that affect access to nutritious food by certain groups or family members according to age or gender.

Any of the above-mentioned factors can cause food insecurity.

### Definition

#### Food security

A person, household or community, region or nation is **food secure** when all members at all times have physical and economic access to buy, produce, obtain or consume sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life.



Vulnerability to household food insecurity is the combined effect of the following three components:

- **Underlying vulnerabilities of a community;** this cannot be changed by the individual and relates to factors including climate and poverty.
- **The external hazards affecting the community** over which they have no control, including drought, flood and political upheaval.
- **The internal capacity of the household/community to cope** with a situation of food insecurity; this is related to a household's or community's resources, skills and networks that allows them to overcome a difficult situation.

The internal capacity is present in

*all* households. Some households may be able to cope with some hazards better than others. Some households may be consistently exposed to hazards or face long-lasting disease in the family and therefore lose their capacity to cope, over time.

### Definition

#### Vulnerability

Vulnerability says something about the level of risk for households or communities concerning *threats to their lives and livelihood\**.

A household's vulnerability is *determined by the ability of a household to cope with risks and shocks* such as drought, flooding, government policies, conflict, and the HIV/AIDS crisis. The magnitude, duration and timing of the shock are important factors.

In order to avoid the most severe impacts of shocks and maintain adequate food access, households and communities employ **coping strategies**.

Vulnerability is *not the same as poverty*, although underlying poverty contributes to increased vulnerability in most emergencies; the effects of disasters are made worse where they are superimposed on a situation of widespread structural poverty.

\* See page 9 for definition of livelihood.

**Example**

South Wollo, Ethiopia

- **Underlying vulnerability:** This is a rural community with rain-dependent livelihoods, little infrastructure, and no health care or jobs.
- **External hazard:** Recurrent drought.
- **Internal capacity to cope:** A household borrows money from an uncle in the city to buy food. They do not want to sell their land or they will have to migrate. Another household sells its animals and uses money to buy food; they hope to buy more animals next year when the rains come.

Poorer people with fewer resources tend to have less capacity for coping with external stresses and hazards. However, they are not always the worst off when a hazard strikes. Often people with more assets have more to lose, and do not always have the capacity to make up for their losses. It is important to distinguish poverty from food insecurity during a disaster.

In any crisis situation communities and households, poor or less poor, will use **coping strategies** in order **to reduce the risks to their lives and livelihoods.**

**Definition**

**Coping strategies**

Food security assessments should consider different coping strategies of communities and households. Who is applying the coping strategy and how well is it working? *Coping strategies* are activities that people ‘choose’ as ways of living through difficult times brought on by some sort of shock to their normal means of livelihood and way of living.

There are different stages of coping. Early coping strategies are not necessarily abnormal, are reversible and cause no lasting damage. These may include collecting wild foods, selling non-essential assets or sending a family member to work elsewhere. More drastic strategies may permanently undermine future food security, for example sale of land, distress migration of whole families or deforestation.

Some coping strategies employed by women and girls, such as prostitution or sexual violence encountered while travelling through unsafe areas, tend to expose them to higher risk of HIV infection and physical harm. Increased migration generally may increase risk of HIV transmission.

Coping strategies may also affect the environment, for example through over-exploitation of commonly-owned natural resources. It is important that food security is protected and supported before all non-damaging options are exhausted.

(Adapted from references 1 and 3)

**Definition**

**Livelihood**

Put simply, livelihood is *the means of making a living*. In a food security context it refers to people, their capabilities, their assets, their income and activities needed to sustain a means of living, including ways to obtain food.

Households have *sustainable livelihoods* when they can cope with and recover from shocks and stress and can maintain their capabilities and assets without undermining their natural environment. Sustainable livelihood refers to people’s capacity to generate and maintain their means of living, enhance their well-being and that of future generations.

Examples of different kinds of livelihoods include:

- one's own agricultural production combined with agricultural wage labour (day labourer);
- one's own agricultural production combined with *non*-agricultural wage labour (wage worker);
- one's own agricultural production combined with livestock ownership (mixed farming);
- one's own agricultural production combined with a small business;
- agricultural wage labour without one's own agricultural production activities;
- non-agricultural wage labour without one's own agricultural production activities;
- livestock ownership without one's own agricultural production activities; and
- pastoral activities.

Agricultural production refers to cash crops and/or crops for one's own consumption.

**Note:** Normally agriculture refers to cultivating plants and raising livestock. However, this guide distinguishes between the two and therefore agriculture refers to plant cultivation and livestock production to raising animals.

(Adapted from reference 4)

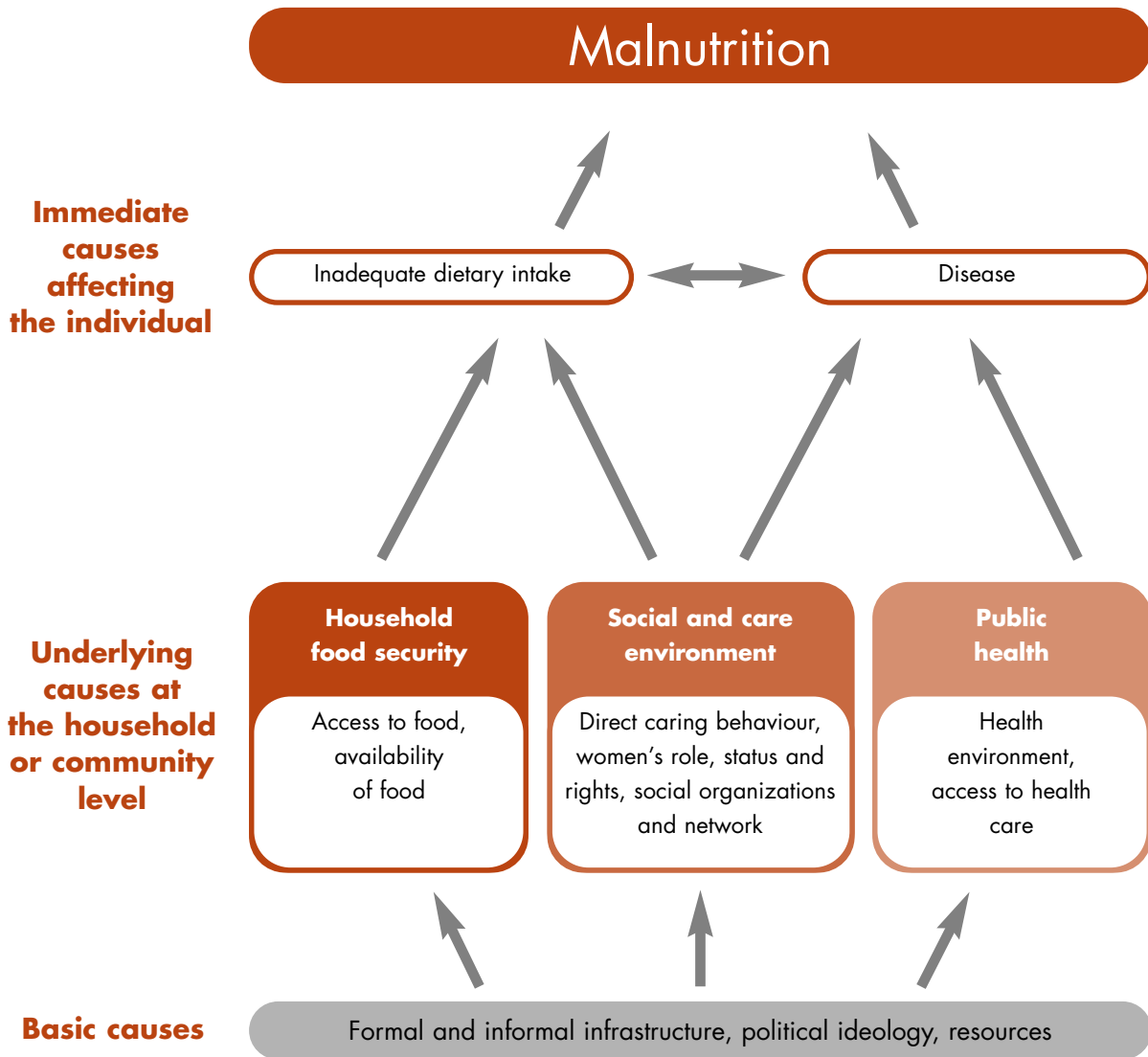
***Coping strategies sometimes have an underlying risk which can increase vulnerability. Following are several examples.***

- A reduction in the amount of food eaten or in the quality of diets can lead to a declining health and nutritional status.
- Reduction in expenditure on school fees and health care undermine human capital.
- Prostitution and external relationships to secure food undermine dignity, and risk social exclusion and HIV infection or other sexually transmitted illnesses.
- Sale of household assets may reduce the future productive capacity of the household.
- Failure to repay loans risks losing future access to credit.
- Over-use of natural resources, such as excessive fishing and collection of firewood, reduces the availability of natural capital.
- Travel to insecure areas to work or to gather food or fuel exposes people, especially women and children, to risk and violence.
- Producing or trading forbidden goods risks arrest and imprisonment.
- Separation of families and mothers from children risks poor standards of child care and malnutrition.

(Adapted from reference 3)

Food insecurity can cause lasting damage to future generations and to the environment but it can also cause physical harm to the individual: it can cause **malnutrition**. It is important to realise that food insecurity can lead to this severe condition and to death, in the longer term. However, malnutrition will not always be caused by food insecurity; there are numerous other causes, including illness, unhealthy environment, unsafe drinking water, and insufficient parental care. The figure below illustrates the varied causes of malnutrition.





Adapted from the UNICEF Framework of Underlying causes of Malnutrition and Mortality

Feeding practices, absence of health centres, reduced availability of clean water and medicine will all influence diet and health. These conditions can be regarded as *underlying causes* for disease and inadequate dietary intake. In addition, there are basic causes which appear at the bottom of the figure which clearly show that certain factors are very difficult to control. These include political regimes, infrastructure to carry services, quality of resources such as land for pasture or cultivation, or rain-fall patterns. These basic causes will influence public health, food security, and the social and care environment.



Olav Salibones/Norwegian Red Cross

# 3 What is an assessment?

Assessment means *judgement, appraisal, estimation or evaluation*. It is a process that is used to understand a situation in order to make decisions on whether there is a need to respond to a hazard or to a situation that can lead to a disaster if nothing is done.

The assessment must collect information that will allow a good analysis of the situation and the threats to life, human dignity, health and livelihoods of the population. The principle of an assessment is that the *affected community* and *local authorities* are consulted.

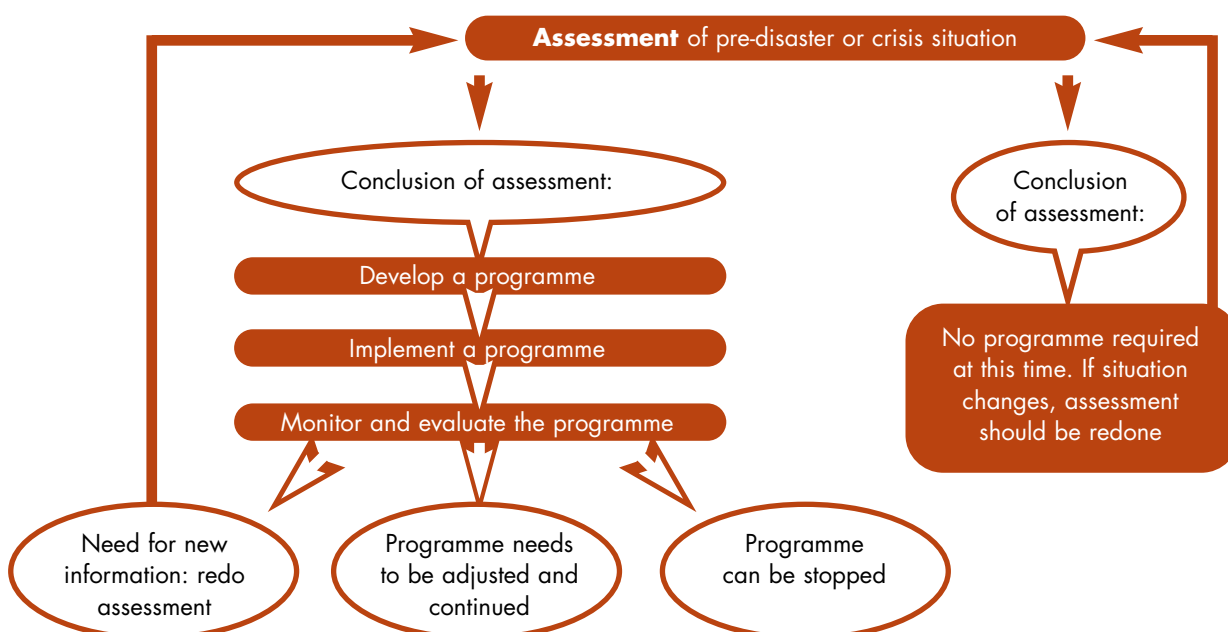
There are two ways assessments can be used:

- as a tool to design a programme (if needed); or
- as a tool to monitor or evaluate a programme in order to adjust an existing programme.

This guide focuses on the first.

An assessment is part of a bigger process that serves a greater purpose than just looking at understanding the situation and the needs. During each assessment the question will be raised whether the National Society should respond or not with the ultimate objective **to save lives** and **to reduce vulnerability** of the community.

The following figure shows how an assessment is the all-important first step to take before developing, implementing and monitoring a programme.



## Definition

### Assessment

Assessments provide an understanding of a hazard situation and a clear analysis of threats to life, dignity, health and livelihoods. Through an assessment it can be determined, in consultation with the relevant authorities and communities, whether assistance is required and, if so, the kind of assistance needed.

(Adapted from references 3)

## Note

A comprehensive assessment does not only identify *needs* of a community but provides an *understanding* of the context and dynamics that led or is leading to a crisis.

(Adapted from reference 5)







# 4 What is a food security assessment?

## What is the objective of a food security assessment?

Food security assessments are no different from general assessments in their aim, but look more specifically at how people try to maintain a secure food environment for themselves, and whether they succeed. The **general objective of a food security assessment** is to understand how severe the food insecurity is, and why this is the case. Then the objective is to determine if there is a need to intervene to return people to a normal food security situation in the short term and/or long term.

The focus of a food security assessment will be on evaluating the food security situation for various groups of people. In addition, food security assessments can help to predict upcoming food insecurity or can predict the duration of an insecure food period.

### *Information needed during a food security assessment*

- How do people make their living?
- How do people meet their food needs?
- What resources do they have?
- Who accesses these resources over time?
- How does a normal situation compare to a crisis?
- Can people manage without assistance from the National Society?
- If not, how can the National Society support coping strategies?

We need to understand **how people make their living**, whether through food production, or working for a salary or a mixture of both. More specifically we need to know **how they meet their food needs**. We need to understand **what resources they have available** for themselves such as land, animals, fishing areas, pasture for grazing, number of livestock, and labour force. We need to understand **who can access these resources** and **whether this access changes over time**. For example it may be that water sources for animals are restricted in the dry season and only those who can pay access them.

The assessment will need to **compare the normal situation and the current situation**. Comparisons between the two allow you to decide how and why the situation has deteriorated. This is the first step towards understanding the needs that arise due to a hazard or chronic crisis and determining the best response.

**Food security** is **not** necessarily **static**; there are likely to be normal fluctuations in the year in terms of food availability, access and utilization. It is important to assess which changes are normal and which are due to a hazard or a chronic crisis.

An assessment of the effects of a flood during the hunger gap will need to consider that food stocks were low and prices probably high at the time of the flood but that this is not the “normal” situation for the whole year. A hunger gap is the period before the main harvest, when food stores are often low and people sometimes need to lower their food intake in order to survive to the next har-

vest. Sometimes a drought or spell of cold weather can lead to loss of livestock, and households may take up to 2 or 3 years to build up their herd numbers back to the numbers before the hazard.

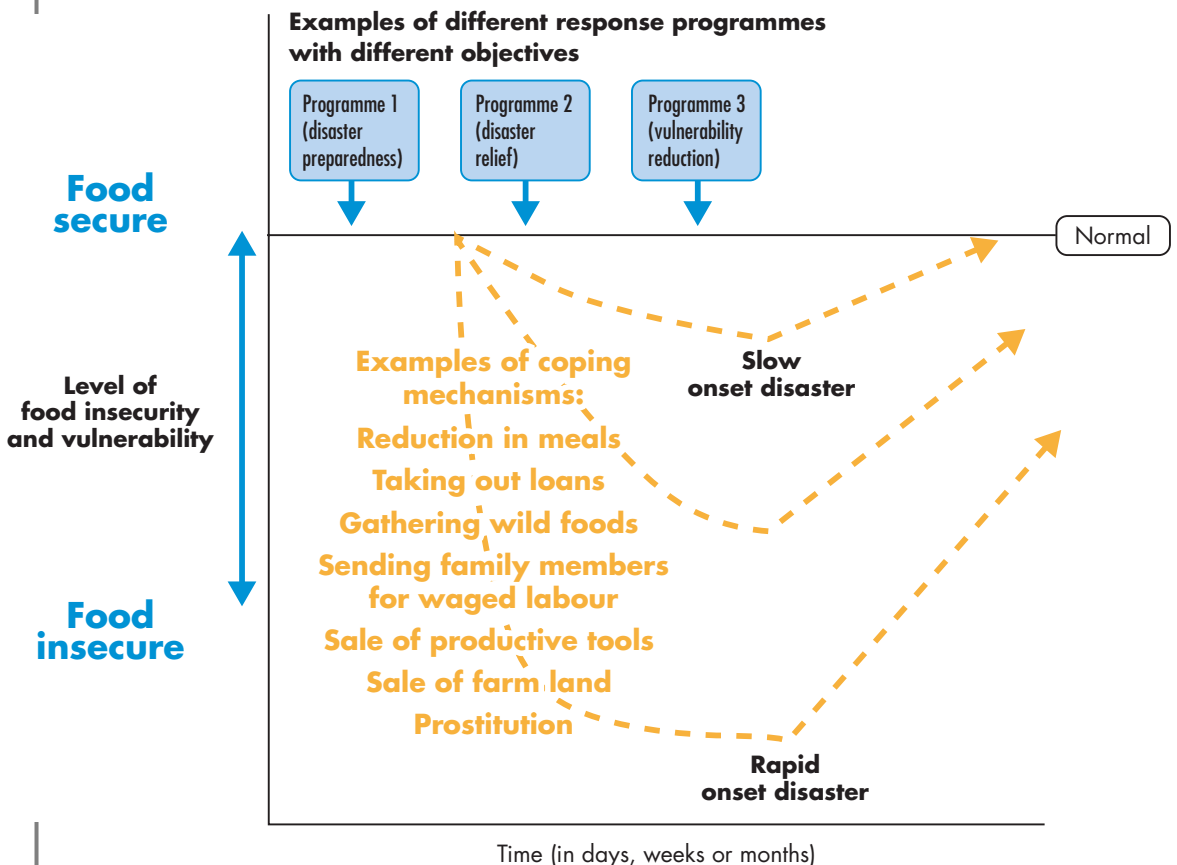
It is important to note that for *each insecure food situation different options of response programmes are needed* and do not always include food aid. Only a good analysis can help decide the most appropriate response for a specific context.

## When to conduct a food security assessment

There are many different situations where people face increased vulnerability to food insecurity and not every household will be affected in the same way. Some people may lose many assets abruptly (as in a rapid or acute crisis) and suddenly find they have little means to survive. Some people lose their assets slowly over time (as in a slow onset or chronic crisis). The next figure shows how food security can be affected over time, through different kinds of crises.

Communities will use different coping mechanisms in order to maintain their level of food security. Early warning signs for food insecurity vary and might include: reduction in the number of meals; taking out loans; selling clothes; unusual increases in food prices; selling productive tools or farm land; unusual population movements; and increased prostitution.

Different assistance programmes at different moments in time will have a different impact on food security. But they all aim at restoring, directly or indirectly, the food security level to the pre-crisis level (bending the curve back to normal, see figure).



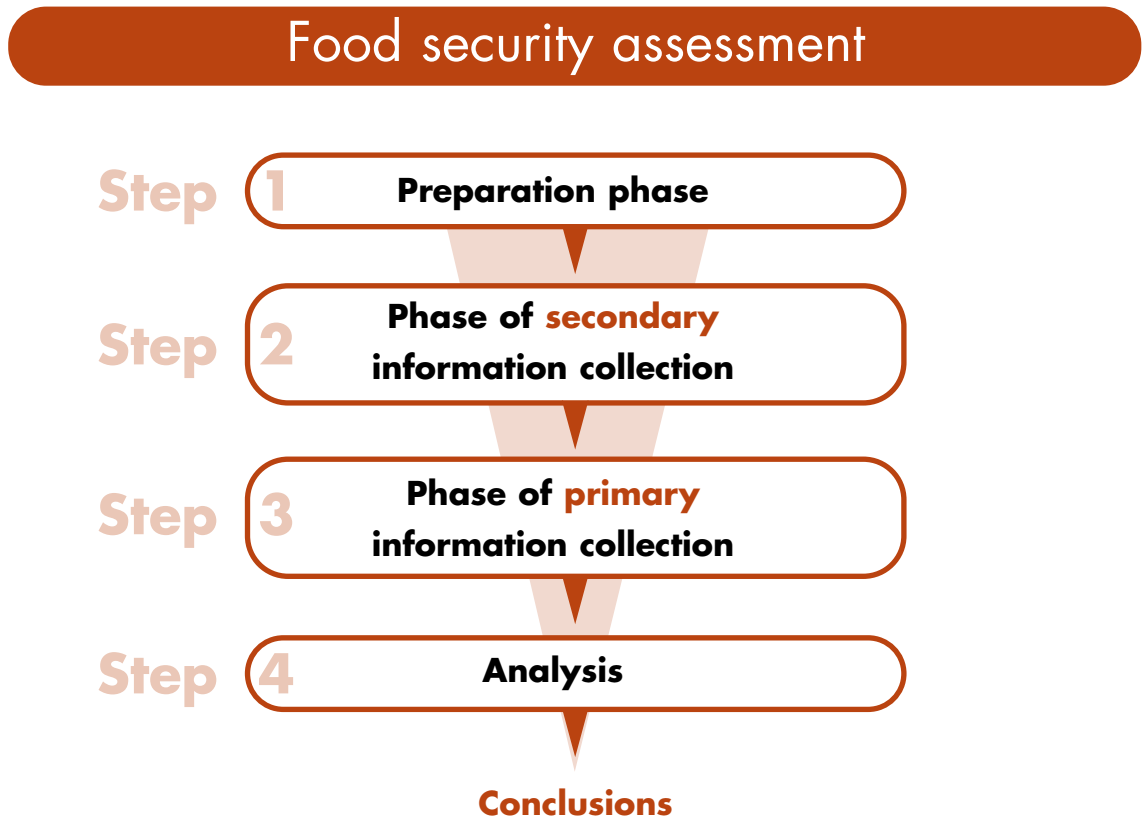
## The main principles of a food security assessment

1. Define a *clear objective* for your food security assessment. The more knowledge you want to obtain, the more you will go into detail or the broader your assessment will be.
2. Focus on the *main questions*:
  - How do people make their living?
  - How do people meet their food needs?
  - What resources do they have?
  - Who accesses these resources over time?
  - Compare a normal situation with the changes due to the hazard or new crisis?
  - Can people manage without assistance from the National Society?
  - If not, how can the National Society support coping strategies? But remember to take into account the mandate, experience and capacity of the National Society – this is not the same in each country.

Specific assessment objectives can emphasize or change some of these questions.

3. Define at *what level* people encounter most problems: *availability* of food in the area, *access* to food or food *utilization*.
4. Try to *understand* the food security situation in an area and how people are trying to meet their needs. If you do not understand the situation, you can not decide if they need your assistance, and what support would be most appropriate.
5. Be *efficient* and *realistic*: Do not collect information you will not use, and take into account what your capacity and possible interventions from the past look like. There is no need to know everything in an assessment.
6. Ensure that *quality* information is collected by focusing on finding the right sources of information. Good information allows for better analysis and decision-making. Cross-check your information (verify, look for confirmation) by consulting various sources. Compare primary and secondary information sources (see Section 5), speak to different people, and compare the information you receive from different people.
7. Focus on *comparing communities*: It is generally better to visit more areas and communities, and interview less people in each, than visit only one or two places and speak with everybody. Do not only go to key towns (most aid organizations work there), but also to smaller areas, even if difficult to access.
8. No matter how objective you try to be during an assessment, everybody runs the risk of being biased or prejudiced because of access to affected areas, communities and individuals, and time spent at each may not be equal. Bias or partiality is introduced into an assessment when there are preferences towards a geographical area or group of people. This may happen unintentionally because of logistical and time constraints. Also, be aware that the conclusions drawn from the assessment may be favouring one geographical area, age group or livelihood group at the cost of another. Bias should always be acknowledged. So, *be aware of subjectivity* in yourself and your team. Try to *reduce bias* as much as you can.
9. *Community participation* is essential to your assessment. You need to involve people who are, or will be, affected by a crisis. It is crucial to involve National Society staff and local branch volunteers in your assessment.

## The different phases of a food security assessment



## Possible responses to food insecurity

The principle of response programmes is **to save lives** and **to reduce vulnerability** in the community. More specifically, food security programming aims **to improve the availability, access to and utilization of food**.

Practically, this implies that programmes aim to **support primary production of food** such as crop and livestock production or fishing. Programmes can also **support income generation or employment**, or can **support development, protection or recovery of assets**. Sometimes programmes can **support access to markets**, for instance through projects such as community village road construction. However, today many National Society programmes are concerned with **direct food aid**. It is good to be aware of the many different forms of assistance before you do your food security assessment.

### Note

A programme that aims to *improve the food security* of a community or a household does not necessarily target food directly; *a programme can be non-food related* but can still improve food security.



Possible interventions to reduce vulnerability and food insecurity	Examples from National Societies in Africa
<b>Food aid</b> in the form of distributions of food rations to give immediate relief to a household, to save lives or to increase household's assets (general food distribution, targeted food distribution, home-based care food ration distribution).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kenya, Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland) 2000 drought response</li> <li>■ Zimbabwe 2002-2003 food aid as part of home-based care programmes for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)</li> </ul>
<b>Food for work</b> provides food-insecure households with opportunities for paid work that produce outputs of benefit to themselves and the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ethiopia 2002 drought response</li> </ul>
<b>Cash for work</b> provides food-insecure households with opportunities for paid work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ethiopia 2000 and 2002 drought response</li> </ul>
<b>Distribution of seeds, tools and fertilizer</b> to encourage agricultural production, including starter packs to returnees, or to diversify crops. Possibly combined with technical training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Southern Africa 2002 food insecurity operation as a result of drought</li> </ul>
<b>Livestock interventions</b> can include animal health measures and veterinary services; de-stocking or restocking livestock; distribution of livestock fodder; provision of alternative water sources; and supporting pastoralist to transport their livestock to alternative grazing areas during severe dry spells.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Rwanda 2002 credit scheme established for small livestock and distribution of animal medicines and pesticides</li> <li>■ Kenya 2001 water sources developed to support livestock in drought-prone area</li> <li>■ Kenya 1997 ministry of agriculture and livestock production purchased ranches in coastal areas for livestock farmers and provided them with transport assistance to transport their herds to these ranches for forage use during the severe dry spell</li> </ul>
<b>Income generating schemes</b> allow people to diversify their sources of income on a small scale, self-employment business schemes. These include support of people in the management, supervision and implementation of their businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Swaziland 2002 vegetable gardening, yield used to generate income</li> </ul>
<b>Training and education in relevant skills</b> allows people to earn an income, for example in carpentry or bike repair.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Zimbabwe small social support groups involved in soap making</li> </ul>
<b>Distributing fishing nets and equipment, or hunting implements</b> allows people to obtain food.	
<b>Local agricultural projects</b> can provide a mixture of production and income-raising activities such as animal husbandry, poultry projects and home gardening. By producing fruit, vegetables and small animals, nutritious food can be obtained for household consumption and for sale and barter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Swaziland 2002 poultry breeding projects for income generation</li> <li>■ Rwanda 2000 planting of seedlings for plant diversification</li> </ul>
<b>Food or cash vouchers</b> for exchange in shops for food and other goods or <b>direct cash distribution</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Niger 2005, cash distribution to female-headed households</li> </ul>
<b>Microfinance projects</b> including providing credit and methods for saving assets, which may involve grants, loans, cattle banks, and cooperative savings accounts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Rwanda 2000 credit scheme for small livestock</li> </ul>
<b>Awareness and advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Zimbabwe 2002-2003 nutrition education in home-based care for PLWHA</li> <li>■ Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso 2004-2005 cover food stores before expected locust invasion</li> </ul>
<b>Support and technical assistance to government services</b>	
<b>Small irrigation and water projects</b> provide support to agriculture or livestock.	

(Adapted from reference 3)



Marko Kotic / International Federation

# 5 How to conduct a food security assessment

**Step 1: Preparation phase**

**Step 2: Phase of secondary information collection**

**Step 3: Phase of primary information collection**

**Step 4: Analysis**

Undertaking an assessment is not a rigid process. The collection of secondary data does not have to be 100 per cent complete before you start collecting primary data. The most important fact is that you **have all the necessary information before you begin analysing information and before you draw your conclusions.**

## Definition

Obtaining **primary information** means collecting new information (primary data) using various methods in which the community and other key people actively participate. The information is collected for the specific purpose of the food security assessment and will be acquired during Step 3 by the assessment team.

Obtaining **secondary information** means accessing existing information (secondary data). The information has already been collected prior to the food security assessment for other purposes. It is collected by others and it will be gathered during Step 2 by the assessment team.

## Step 1:

### Preparation phase of food security assessment

#### How to prepare a food security assessment

- 1 Formulate the **objectives** of your food security assessment.
- 2 **Select the assessment team** and draft the **terms of reference** for your assessment.
- 3 **Define the areas** which you will visit for the assessment (see text box).
- 4 Find out whether **other organizations** are doing assessments, and where and why they are doing the assessments.
- 5 Establish your assessment **budget**, and arrange, if needed, for a local language translator.
- 6 **Inform the government authorities** of your plans.
- 7 **Involve your colleagues** at the National Society branches in the area where you go.
- 8 **Clarify if you need special authorization** to go to certain areas and obtain this.

## Definition

**Terms of reference** are an overview of responsibilities and tasks you and your team will have during the assessment. It is a kind of temporary *job description* with a *list of expected results and outputs*.

Terms of reference should provide a timeline and details which person is responsible for which outputs.

For example, decide who will gather data, who will analyse data, and who will write the final report.

- 9 **Prepare** your field **equipment** and secure your **transport** for the whole period of the assessment.
- 10 **Prepare a travel plan** and obtain information to ascertain if the plan is feasible logistically, and in the given time.
- 11 **Start to prepare your methodology** for the next steps; list the secondary information you need and how to gather this (Step 2). Consider who you will interview for the primary information, your questions and what techniques you will use (Step 3).
- 12 Try to **include a female interviewer** if you go to areas where women and men do not mix very much in public.

Tip

**How to define the assessment area**

Based on initial information, you may have an idea where you need to go to do the assessment. This may be the most affected area but it may also be the surrounding areas that have become overcrowded with affected or displaced people. There is no clear rule, except that in the case of a sudden hazard you need to listen carefully to government, local authorities, NGOs and other agencies. When your assessment relates more to a slow onset disaster you will need more careful selection of the area, as per Step 2.

It is also very important to find out whether other organizations are carrying out food security assessments. If so, find out where they are taking place, to avoid duplication.

Be aware that *your mandate as a National Society is unique* and that in principle you should have access everywhere. Take this in account when you select your areas because not every organization will have this advantage.

Be aware that *you may need to adjust your plans based on* information you obtain during the assessment. For example, the road you anticipated is closed; people have moved away from the area you planned to visit; you obtain information from reliable sources that the communities you planned to visit are food secure.

In particular, the selection of the areas you visit may be subject to change and will be influenced by secondary and primary information you gather while planning or undertaking Steps 2 and 3.

Tip

**Here are some positive personality features of a person conducting a food security assessment:**

- likes to work with people;
- ideally speaks the language of the region to visit;
- a very good listener;
- a good observer;
- neutral and not biased;
- friendly;
- goal oriented and focused on the assessment task;
- has some analytical skills; and
- is flexible.



***What to take on a food security assessment***

- Maps; formal or self-made maps from the region
- Clothing that identifies the National Society
- National Society identity card
- Pencils, pens and paper
- Material for proportional piling; 100 beans or beads plus reserve per interviewer (see Annex 5)
- This food security assessment guide

***Optional***

- Camera
- MUAC screening tape (see Annex 1)
- Small samples of local food

## **How to define food security assessment objectives**

The examples below refer to an *initial* food security assessment. Assessments done to monitor and evaluate will have totally different objectives.

### **Example 1**

#### **The objective of an emergency food security assessment**

**Assess the ability of hazard-affected households in meeting their essential food and non-food requirements, without damaging their livelihoods, health and dignity.**

The idea in this example is to see whether people are in need of emergency relief aid. To what extent can they manage without assistance and why? And what coping mechanisms are they undertaking?

Following are some of the key questions such an assessment tries to answer:

- Is external emergency assistance needed? What would happen without assistance? Is food aid appropriate?
- What type of food is needed and when? Is there a food shortage? How many people require food? How much food is required, and for how long?
- Who needs it, where and why? Who is mostly affected? Why can people not help themselves? Why can the government not cope?
- What options exist for getting food to the affected people? What are the most appropriate types of interventions, delivery and distribution channels? What are the targeting criteria? Where is it best to obtain the food? What are the costs? What are locally-available resources and capacities to transport, store and distribute food?
- What non-food assistance is needed and why? When is non-food assistance such as water and seeds needed? Who needs them?
- What are people doing to cope with the situation? Who is able to manage and for how long? Who is unable to manage?

## **Example 2**

### **The objective of a food security assessment in communities highly affected by HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis**

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**Assess the ability to deal with shocks and problems that could lead to decreased food security of a population highly affected by HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.**

Following are some of the key questions that an assessment tries to answer:

- How are people making a living at the moment? How do they obtain income and food?
- Has the situation changed over the last year? How has it changed? How was it before?
- What are the main problems of the community nowadays?
- How is the community responding to the problems? Is this sufficient to absorb all the problems? If not, why? How long can the population sustain the solutions?
- What is the current situation people face in regard to factors including health, quality and quantity of water, housing and schooling?
- What is the composition of the household? Who is engaged in what kind of activity?
- Is external assistance needed? What would happen without assistance? What does the community suggest?
- Who requires assistance? Where, why and for how long? Who are the specific vulnerable groups requiring assistance?

A generic **terms of reference** for the assessment team should contain the following:

- a description of the background and context of the situation in which the food security assessment will take place, including National Society activities in the area, background on the situation and a description of the current situation;
- objective of the assessment, including the purpose and what needs to be found out;
- a list of activities the team or individual has to undertake;
- the expected output, such as a list of recommendations for food aid, and a plan for meeting the food security needs;
- a report on how the National Society should respond to this crisis;
- a timetable including the number of weeks needed to do the assessment and write up the results;
- a list of the team and each person's expertise or area of responsibility for the assessment; and
- a budget (optional).

See Annex 2 for examples.

## Step 2: Phase of secondary information collection

Secondary information comes in two categories:

- information collected prior to a crisis; and
- information collected in response to a crisis but prior to your assessment.

This guide focuses mainly on the first group.

Secondary information is collected and analysed for the following reasons:

- to better clarify the context of the whole region/area affected (it could provide baseline information on which to compare all your primary information);
- to guide you on what primary information you still have to collect in order to meet your food security assessment objectives; and
- to save time and cost and help you be more efficient in information gathering in Step 3.

The collection of secondary data should be reviewed for its *relevance to the assessment objectives*. Some information may be easily available and accessible, while other information might require more effort to be collected. The *quality* of the information will vary. Secondary information will often be found at national capital, provincial and district town levels.

An important information source to consult during secondary information collection is your colleagues; National Society staff and volunteers. *Institutional memory* is valuable, and asking for information from colleagues who were involved in previous emergencies and assessments can give good and reliable information.

### Tip

#### Quality check of secondary data

Ask yourself these questions and the answers will help to make a judgement on how accurate and useful this information is for your assessment:

- What is the original purpose of the data or publication?
- What is the information source?
- Is the source normally seen as reliable?
- What is the potential level of bias?
- Is the information current or out of date?
- Is the information objective or subjective?

(Adapted from reference 1)

Following are some of **the most common sources** for secondary information:

#### Key informants

- Government officials and ministers, local authorities, National Society colleagues, NGO workers and UN staff

#### Secondary data from documents

- Government documents, for example for data on demographics, infrastructure and agriculture
- Official statistics
- Project reports from National Societies, ICRC and NGOs
- Project evaluations
- Research organizations
- UN reports from WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, UNOCHA
- Joint assessment mission reports, for example UNHCR/WFP (joint needs assessment missions), FAO/WFP (crop and food supply assessment missions)

#### Websites

- Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) Network [www.fews.net](http://www.fews.net)
- Relief website [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)
- Southern Africa Humanitarian Information Network [www.sahims.net](http://www.sahims.net)
- West Africa Humanitarian Information [www.humanitarianinfo.org/westafrica](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/westafrica)
- WFP [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)
- UNHCR [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)
- UNICEF [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- FAO [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)
- WHO [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- UNOCHA [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org)
- Humanitarian Information Centres [www.humanitarianinfo.org](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org)

The following overview is a checklist of information you might need to obtain. The list is *not exhaustive nor will it all be relevant to the objective of your food security assessment*. Also there is no guarantee that all this information has been collected or will be accessible to you. You might have to make a selection because of time constraints.

Type of secondary information	Why it is useful
<b>Demographic profile</b> , including the number of people in the area, the presence of refugees or internally displaced persons and their numbers	Impression on how many people are potentially affected by food insecurity
<b>Maps</b> with political/administrative boundaries, roads, rails, rivers, villages and water points	Information on where people were/are, how to access them, potential obstacles, under whose authority do they fall
<b>Overview of the various social groups</b> by ethnicity, wealth and/or religion and <b>their physical location</b>	Information on how people are related socially and how to access them (for example through religious leaders or traditional elders)
<b>Social and political structures/policies affecting food security</b> , including government policies affecting production, rationing and subsidies, transport bans, fuel prices, restriction of movement, groups prone to social discrimination by government/local authorities	Idea about limitations and constraints for population
<b>Maps of infrastructure services</b> including health facilities, schools, mosques and churches	Information on social gathering points, where to find key informants
<b>Information on traditional/political power structures</b> , including who makes the decisions at household, community and regional levels. Is the government's decision-making strongly decentralized?	Impression on who are most influential people in the community or region
<b>Livelihood profile/food economy zones</b> , including information on how people make their living and what the main categories are (for example waged labour, agricultural production, livestock or trading)	Impression of how people survive and their level of vulnerability due to various crises
<b>Market analysis</b> that includes market locations, access and days. Market prices (baseline, trends) of major food and cash crops by region, season and availability.	Information about normal and/or current market situation
<b>Nutritional status and seasonality</b> : anthropometry (body measurements), micronutrient deficiencies	Impression of nutritional vulnerability of people
<b>Disease patterns and seasonality</b> , including prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, measles, diarrhoea and meningitis	Impression of timing and severity of important diseases and increased needs
<b>Previous emergencies and humanitarian aid and patterns of assistance</b> : history of time scale of previous emergencies/trends and national response	Information on past vulnerability (natural or political), possible recurrent weakening of food security, trends in aid provision, and lessons learned
<b>Existing disaster preparedness or response or contingency plans</b> , including from government, National Societies, NGOs, UN and ICRC	Impression on capacity for response to current crisis
<b>Overview of what and where other organizations are working</b> in terms of food security, development and rehabilitation work. What information do they have on food security (especially NGOs, WFP, ICRC and social groups)?	Identification of important local key informants and organizations and assistance they have received in relation to food security
<b>Security information</b> , including on hazards (such as flooding and landmines), on check points, on areas prone to fighting, riots and recent security incidents	Impression of security climate of the area



Type of secondary Information	Why it is useful
<b>Existing taboos</b> such as on certain foods, <b>discriminations</b> such as against PLWHA and <b>strong cultural and religious beliefs</b>	Better understanding on why people behave the way they do, how to access them and on appropriateness of certain aid programmes
<b>Availability of seasonal calendar</b> showing when crops are planted, harvested, when land is weeded and what other agricultural/livestock activities take place (see Annex 4)	Information on people's main agricultural/livestock activities at the time of assessment and impression of potential impact of crisis or hazard on harvest
<b>Existing early warning systems on food security</b>	Idea of the potential severity of a food security crisis
<b>Rainfall data (in normal years, trends)</b>	Impression on whether the current situation is normal or alarming, concerning water availability for crops and animals
<b>Access to water</b> in normal situations for livestock, irrigation and human consumption	Information on how communities will be affected by crisis or hazard concerning their main water resources
<b>Seasonal migration patterns</b> by region and their reasons	Understanding of where people will be in a normal situation and why, and what kind of hazard can change this and how
<b>Livestock and land ownership:</b> Is land and livestock owned by only a few people or does everybody own a plot or herd?	Idea of community assets and distribution

All or some of this information will give you a first impression on the area, communities and potential impact of different kinds of crises. Also, with this information, it should be possible to identify the information that is missing, that needs to be collected through primary data collection.

Do not be alarmed if the gaps that remain are substantial; collecting primary data will help you to fill them in part or in full. Remember that you might have to change the areas you want to visit, based on secondary information.

### Step 3:

## Phase of primary information collection

This step is crucial for finding out the level of food insecurity and vulnerability and *you should collect the data yourself*. It is not a complicated process but requires various techniques. Each technique produces different results and these results, together with the secondary information, will enable you to analyse the situation and draw conclusions.

In Step 2 the focus was on secondary information. In this step, the focus is on the actual situation. The information will be collected directly from affected communities, before, during or after a severe crisis.

You will need to collect a lot of information, and there are several techniques that make it easy. You will collect information by **observation** and **interviews with individuals or in groups**. You may also collect information through **measuring** and **questionnaires**.

Using **questionnaires** is controversial: You need a lot of technical expertise to write a good questionnaire. If the questions are too focused you miss important information. Also, the analysis and

**Tip** During a food security assessment, focus on how the situation today has *changed* compared to the time everything was considered reasonably 'normal'.

interpretation of questionnaires is not simple, and you need some training to use them. For example, one of the main aspects of the assessment is the analysis of community and household capacities to withstand problems: direct, inflexible questions will only provide part of the answer.

Instead of questionnaires it is better to use **checklists** that help you to direct your questions and prevent you from missing essential information (see Interview checklist section below).

An example of **measuring** is gauging the level of acute malnutrition by passing a tape around the upper arm of children or adults. This is called a mid-upper-arm circumference (MUAC) measurement. It is a very simple method and gives you quick information on how many people are acutely malnourished (regardless of the cause). Annex 1 explains how to do MUAC measurements.

MUAC measurements can be taken after interviews with people: You can measure individuals after household visits or you can ask whole groups of children or adults to be gathered and then measured.

This guide will focus on the most important techniques for collection of primary information: **observation** and **interviews**.

## How to collect information through *observation*

Through observation you can obtain an enormous amount of information. Focus on observation mostly before and after interviews, but obviously also during the interviews. Observations after the interview can help you to cross-check what people have told you. Things that you observe before the interview can be clarified while interviewing people. Do not forget to make notes of these observations, even if you only scribble down some keywords that will remind you later to write down your findings.

What information do you want to obtain through <b>observation</b> ?	How
<p><b>General situation in and around the area or village</b>            What damage has been done by the hazard?            Where are people living? What are their living conditions?            Are they living in houses, huts, plastic sheeting or tents?            Are the river beds flooded or very dry?</p>	Walk and drive through the area.
<p><b>Condition of livestock and crops</b>            Have crops grown to their normal size? Are the fields weeded? Are some areas not harvested or are there empty fields? Do you see many dying crops?            What animals can you see? Are there many? How do they look like? Are they healthy or skinny?</p>	Walk through area and observe fields from car before and after visit to an area.
<p><b>Condition of infrastructure</b>            What damage has been done to roads, railroads, telephone and electricity networks, water and sewage systems, wells, important buildings and irrigation systems?</p>	Walk and drive through areas and communities.
<p><b>Transport</b>            Do you see trucks arriving or leaving?            Are these trucks carrying food? Are they empty or full?</p>	
<p><b>Presence of other aid agencies</b>            Do you see other organizations around? Look out for their cars, staff, office, logos and humanitarian aid.</p>	
<p><b>Security</b>            Can you hear or see gunfire or riots?            Are there checkpoints? Is it difficult for you to pass them?            Are there many civilians on the street? Can you see police, combatants or armoury?</p>	

What information do you want to obtain through <b>observation</b> ?	How
<p><b>Environment</b>                      Is there a lot of garbage? Are people burning it?                      Can you see any dead people or animals?                      Are people collecting the bodies?                      Are there many flooded areas? Is the water stagnant?                      Can you see many insects, such as locusts?                      Can you see many fresh graves?                      Are there many trees? Are they alive or are many cut down?</p>	Walk and drive through areas and communities.
<p><b>Condition of specific food security-related areas</b>                      What is the condition of mills, marketplaces and shops?                      What is being sold on the market? Is there scarcity? Are people buying?</p>	
<p><b>People's activities</b>                      What are people doing? Are they working? If so, where and at what?                      Are there many people doing nothing?                      Can you see many ill or wounded people?                      Are many people queuing? What are they queuing for?                      Can you see many people moving with their families and belongings?</p>	Walk through communities, including along smaller roads.
<p><b>Condition of the people and differences</b>                      How do people look physically? Do they seem malnourished, dirty, wounded or ill? How well dressed are they?                      Are people stressed, aggressive or afraid?                      Are there mainly men, women or children?</p>	
<p><b>Condition in people's homes and presence of family members</b>                      Are people preparing food? What kind of food?                      How are they preparing food? What fuel are they using?                      Can you see food and fuel stores?                      What kind of assets do people have in and around their homes?                      Are there many family members at home? Are they mainly children, the elderly, adults or adolescents? What are they doing?                      Are they growing food around their homes? Are there animals in and around their homes?</p>	Visit homes and property around homes.

Not all of your observations will reflect the effects of an acute crisis. Some conditions might have been like that for many years. In addition, you might visit an area on the day where there is no market so food and transport might be less visible. Or perhaps you are visiting during a season just before the harvest (during the hunger gap) and food stores are low. This can be normal but it can also be more severe than previous years. During your interviews you could verify all of this and find out to what level people are vulnerable and food insecure, how long this has been the case and what the causes are.

## How to collect information through *interviews*

### What are interviews?

Interviews during an assessment mean having meetings and discussions with people. You should hold various interviews with different people to complete the information you are looking for. Most of these are **semi-structured interviews**. This means that you have prepared some of the questions and subjects in advance. You will have a checklist of many topics you want to discuss and your checklist enables you to pose all the questions you think are relevant and will ensure you don't forget important issues.

#### Definition

#### Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews take place with people in groups or as individuals, often specifically selected. Preferably, interviews should take place away from other people, minimizing distraction during the interview and ensuring people feel free to talk. A checklist of key issues or open-ended questions is prepared in advance and serves as an aid to the interviewer. The questions serve as a tool to structure the discussion and aim to encourage people to say what they think on a certain topic. However, the interviewer will also motivate people to bring up things *they* want to talk about. The style of the interview is conversational.

The questions are open-ended. This means that they can give you any answer they want, you do not give them a list of answers from which to choose. Since you don't use a standard form for their answers, you have to write down what they say.

### Who should you interview?

Interview different people in different settings and every time you have a different objective and focus of your discussion. The three main approaches are:

- interviews with **groups from the community: focus groups;**
- interviews with **households;** and
- interviews with individuals such as **key-informants.**

#### Definition

##### Focus group

This is a group of people gathered together to discuss a specific subject of common interest or knowledge. A focus group brings out a range of opinions and views as well as variations that exist in a particular community in terms of beliefs, experiences and practices. It helps to identify a range of information rather than precise information. In food security assessments the focus will be on all topics related directly or indirectly to availability, access and utilization of food. A focus group interview is a form of *group interviewing* and you address your questions to the group as opposed to one individual.

## Interviews with:

### Community focus groups

A focus group involves bringing 6-12 people together to discuss a **subject of common interest**. This fulfils several functions:

- A lot of information can be gathered in a short time.
- Information can be cross-checked.
- Different perspectives can be debated and your assumptions challenged.

There are two types of focus groups; heterogeneous and homogenous.

**Heterogeneous** (participants are different). You choose people from a variety of backgrounds to gain diverse perspectives. This is useful when we need **to get a broad view of the situation in a short period of time.**

Usually one or more heterogeneous focus groups are held at the beginning of the field assessment. This helps to understand the overall situation and the structure of the community. From this information we are able to decide which types of *homogeneous* groups we want to interview.

An example of this is gathering people together when you arrive in an area including the community leader and others who happen to be around. This is good for a first impression of problems. You need to define with them the different groups in the area, including livelihood, religion or ethnicity.

**Homogeneous** (participants are similar). You choose people who come from similar backgrounds, for example people from the same livelihood group or a group of women. Homogeneous groups are used if we want to investigate an issue in detail from the perspective of one group.

An example of this is gathering a group of women to discuss food habits, agriculture and nutritional issues. Another example is gathering a group of cash crop farmers or daily wage labourers or miners to discuss their specific way of making a living. Yet another example is gathering a group of displaced people to discuss why they are displaced and how they obtain food.



## Households

Households comprise a group of family members and they give information on their **household food economy**. This includes how they make a living, their coping mechanisms, number of dependent family members and food consumption pattern.

Examples include:

- a household with people affected by HIV/AIDS;
- a household that is affected by severe drought;
- a household with displaced family members that lost all its assets due to a flood; or
- a nomadic household.

## Key-informants

Key-informants are people **who have specific knowledge** about certain aspects of the community. They help us to collect information rapidly and in a focused way. Mostly you see them individually; sometimes you interview two or three together.

Examples include:

- traders (food, livestock, seeds);
- market people (buyers, sellers);
- school teachers;
- religious leaders;
- health personnel (clinics, veterinary services);
- community (health) workers;
- home visitors;
- local government officials;
- military, rebel leaders;
- millers; and
- local National Society branches, NGO, UN and ICRC staff.

Key-informants are those people who have an interesting perspective and are able to express it. No guidelines can be provided for the identification of such people; it could be an elderly woman who lived her life through various crises and can give comparisons, or an older child, a patient, a widow or a migrant worker.

During a food security assessment you should ideally see at least one heterogeneous focus group in the area. From that you can define the homogenous groups you would like to interview: often this is one homogenous group for each main livelihood and a focus group discussion with women only.

In addition, you should ideally interview at least two key-informants, depending on the kind of information you want to obtain. At least two household visits are needed to get more details on household food economy.

The household visits also allow you to make good observations and cross-check or clarify findings you obtained during the focus group discussions. Therefore it is good to do these household interviews *after* the focus group discussions.

*Each kind of interview is unique in its objectives and therefore cannot be substituted for the other.* For example, a focus group interview cannot replace a household interview, or vice versa.

Tip

**Duration of interviews**

A focus group discussion should last one to two hours.

A household interview should last 15 minutes to one hour.

A key-informant interview can last from a few minutes up to one hour.

Note

**Interviewing through a local translator**

You might be in a situation where you need a translator to help you with the local language. A good translator translates, as exactly as possible, your questions and does not include their own opinions. Always take time before the interview to discuss with the translator the techniques you will be using and the general topic of conversation. Ask for a literal translation, rather than personal interpretation. Tell them that you would like to hear their impressions afterwards, but that during the interview you want to hear the viewpoint of the people interviewed. Wherever possible, try to work with the same translator throughout. A good translator is a partner, who knows how to manage a group properly and can help you out of trouble if you ask an inappropriate question. The best translators will quickly grasp the purpose and logic of the interview and with practice should be able to conduct interviews on their own. If a translator is really unsatisfactory find someone more suitable – it is impossible to conduct good work with inadequate translation.

(Adapted from reference 7)

Ideally you include all three kinds in your food security assessment. However, if you have extreme time or security constraints at one site, make sure you have *at least two good focus group discussions*, and visit two or three households but make the latter short.

In addition, key-informant interviews are also essential and can never be skipped but you can be more flexible: You might be able to find key-informants outside the area of your interest. If for one reason or another you cannot gather people together for focus group discussions (for example, you hardly see any people gathered together), you might want to do 10-20

household visits. By doing this you can obtain information that is representative of an area or livelihood group or ethnic group. In this case you should randomly choose your households (see below).

**How to select the people you want to interview****Selecting a focus group**

Selecting the people you want to interview depends on the information you need. Firstly, you want some *general information* directly and indirectly related to food security. For this, a heterogeneous focus group discussion with people of different backgrounds and opinions is the best choice. There are two ways to do this: either you select the people for the group, or you begin the focus group with the first group you meet upon arrival in the area.

**Tip**

When you ask questions, make sure they are:

- simple;
- clear;
- short;
- non-judgmental or critical;
- well-translated;
- directed to the whole group; and
- relevant and focused to your assessment goal.

*You select the people for the focus group:* For example, you include local health workers, farmers, government administrators, traders and teachers, and if appropriate with a good balance between men and women. In order to do this you ask community leaders to nominate the people or you select people at random, on the basis of their features.

*You begin the focus group with the first group you meet upon arrival in the area:* For exam-

ple, you arrive in an area where you see many people gathered and you ask them for an interview. However, before you do this it is best still to see whether there is a community leader present or another person with authority and ask their permission and involvement.

Subsequently, you hold a focus group meeting with much more detail on food security issues. You ask the community leader to help you select a more homogenous group, for example a group of women, a group of people from the same ethnic group, people from same livelihood group, or people from different livelihood groups but from same geographical area.

### Selecting households

Ideally, following a few focus group discussions, you walk through the area to observe the situation and cross-check the information obtained in the focus groups. This is also a good moment to do some household visits, with or without a more detailed interview. You select them randomly and not all clustered next to each other (see box).

Sometimes the participants of the focus group will want to show you around the area and take you to their homes. After this visit you can select another home and ask to visit this household.

The reason for the random selection is so that information does not only come from influential, dominating people (who may be wealthier or may only want you to see the poorest households) but that what you see is a representation of the community.

### Selecting key-informants

From the information you need it will be easy to determine the key-informants you want to select. Local people can help you to identify them and find them. Do not forget that on the way to or from an area it might be worth stopping to speak for a few minutes with, for example, a herder, a few women together collecting firewood, a migrant or a truck driver, to get their perspective of the food security situation.

**Tip**

#### How to determine which households to visit

Depending on time, carry out interviews in at least two or three households in each sub-community. If you can, stand in the centre of the sub-community, throw up your pen and walk in the direction it lands on the ground. Walk until you reach the edge of the sub-community, counting the number of houses that you pass. Divide this number by the number of households that you wish to interview; this gives the interval between households. For example, if you want to interview three households and you count 47 households on your walk, the interval is  $47/3 = 16$ . Choose a number at random between one and 16 (for example nine); throw the pen in the air again and walk in the pen's direction and count nine houses (or any other number you select). This is the first house that you will visit. After this house, walk in the same direction and count 16 houses. This is the second household to be interviewed. Count another 16 houses to determine the third household you will interview.

## How to conduct an interview

Focus group interviews, interviews with household members or with key-informants differ mainly in the *kind of information* you obtain. The interview discussion method is slightly different for focus groups because you deal with a number of people at the same time who might all want to have their say. Therefore it is important that you guide the group by introducing topics for discussion and that you help the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion with and amongst them. The suggestions in this section are made especially for focus group discussions but also apply to interviews with households and key-informants. For more guidance on how to do assessment interviews, the *International Federation Guidelines for Emergency Assessment* can help you.

### Guidelines for focus group interviews during food security assessments

- **Prepare well** for interviews. Be clear about the information that you need for each interview.
- **Start** the interview with some **general questions** about life in the community or the recent incidents or disaster. Set an informal tone; you want people to be relaxed, it is not a police investigation!
- Slowly **shape the direction of the discussion** towards the information you need.
- Do **not focus only on the problems people have now**, but **also** on how they lived *before* the crisis and how things have changed. Concentration on problems only gives the impression that your objective is to find out “what the National Societies can give”. This encourages people to present “shopping lists” of material requirements. Do not forget that one of your objectives is also to understand the food security situation.
- When you discuss sensitive subjects such as sources of income; certain coping mechanisms including theft and begging, **talk about the community in general rather than the personal** circumstances of the people being interviewed. For example, ask “What do people do when their crops fail?” rather than, “What do you do when your crop fails?”
- Try **to involve all the people** during the discussion. It might not always be possible because of a strong hierarchy or social order in the group or because of differences in participation between shy and dominant personalities. But you should make an effort to support a relaxed, informal atmosphere. Make sure that everyone understands they have equal status within the group and that they should all feel free to express any opinion that they may hold. Actively encourage “less powerful” participants and emphasize the constructive nature of the discussion. Try to understand their problems and emphasize that you are not looking for people to blame.
- Whenever you need **a translator for a local language** (sometimes this can be a colleague from a National Society or somebody from the local community) be careful that the translator really translates what you or the group says and not what the translator thinks. It is best to “check” this with different questions about the same issue during the interview.
- **Ask the people to bring food items** which you do not know and ask them how they prepare it.
- Remain **open** and professionally **inquisitive** during the interview, do not assume too much, look out for the unexpected and have a healthy doubt/skepticism towards what you are told: People may purposefully withhold information in order to make their situation seem worse than it actually is in the hope that this will encourage you to bring aid to their area. Listen to what is said and cross-check against other interviews and with your observations.

**Interviews with households** require specific additional attention concerning the home visit. In some cultures it is not possible for strangers to visit women in their homes. Sometimes a male relative must be present. If so, politely explain to the men the reason for the interview and the importance of hearing the women’s point of view in their own words.



Visits of this kind can be intrusive. You are in someone's home. Accept traditional offers of hospitality such as tea. Be sensitive about the way you ask questions. Common sense, respect and politeness are important features! Keep the interview as conversational as possible. Do not rush.

Observe; look around, see what food is being prepared. Note the household items, their condition, and what seems to be missing.

Ask general questions about their lives, diet and livelihoods and the changes that are taking place. Ask specific questions about the things you see around you: "What is that vegetable? When do you eat it?" If you see packaging from humanitarian aid organisations ask what they received, when they received it, why, how much and from whom.

Taste food if it is offered to you. This helps build trust and is a good entry point for a discussion of food.

**Interviews with key-informants** are a vital source of information but their own interests, and the influence their information might have must be taken into account and balanced with other perspectives wherever possible. This is especially true for information from political key-informants such as government officials and political figures. It is extremely important to realize that key-informants can only complete your information for their area of expertise. This means that you should interview them only on that area.

**Tip** Some things to do during the interviews:

- Always introduce yourself.
- Explain the purpose of your interview or meeting (your objective).
- Give an idea of time you need from them.
- Manage your participants; control the dominant and make the shy talk.
- Be calm, patient and attentive.
- Finish by giving people a chance to ask you questions.
- Take the culture into account.
- Summarize and thank the people.

**Tip** Some things not to do during the interviews:

- Don't begin with sensitive questions.
- Don't ask too many questions at the same time, this might be confusing.
- Don't speak with individuals during the group discussion; keep everything addressed to the whole group.
- Don't create expectations.
- Don't interrupt when someone is talking during the interview or asking for information.
- Don't assume that you know the answer or that an informant is wrong about something.
- Don't lead or give clues to the respondent with your preconceived ideas. Stay neutral while asking questions.

## Information to collect during interviews

In order to reach your main food security assessment objective you need to obtain more detailed information on how people are living and eating, how they make their living, how they obtain food and what agriculture activities they undertake. Some information is more easily obtained through focus group discussions, other with household interviews or key-informant interviews. The table below provides suggestions but each food security assessment situation is different and you may have reasons to undertake interviews differently.

The table also gives ideas for tools and techniques to use during interviews, including:

- mapping;
- year ranking;
- seasonal calendar;
- proportional piling;

- pair-wise ranking;
- timeline;
- activity profile; and
- price tables or figures.

Each of these techniques is explained in the Annexes.

What information do you want to obtain through <i>interviews</i> ?	F G	H H	K I	How? Which tools?
<b>Composition of community (demographic profile)</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, mapping
<b>History and sequence of events</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, timeline
<b>How people make their living</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions
<b>Agriculture, such as crop performance and harvest estimates</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, year ranking, seasonal calendar
<b>Livestock, such as herd size, water availability and disease</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, year ranking, seasonal calendar
<b>Income</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
<b>Expenditure</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
<b>How people obtain their food</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
<b>Labour for wages or food</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions
<b>Food consumption patterns</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
<b>Market prices and evolution</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, table/figure
<b>Perception of main problems</b>	■	■	■	Pair-wise ranking
<b>General issues, such as health and water</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, mapping
<b>Infrastructure, such as transport, housing and school</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, mapping
<b>Daily activity pattern</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions, activity profile
<b>Security</b>	■	■	■	Checklist questions
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	Depending on the question			Checklist questions and questions you add yourself, depending on the situation and your objectives

**FG** = Focus group  
**HH** = Household  
**KI** = Key-informant

■ Most preferred method  
 ■ Less preferred method  
 ■ Least preferred method

In the following section examples of **checklist questions** are given for each subject. You might already have some of the information through Step 2 (secondary information collection) or through observations from Step 3.

## Interview checklist: what to ask

The checklist with pre-prepared questions helps you during your interviews and guides you towards what you want to know. The questions are examples only, and the way you ask them is flexible. The list is not exhaustive and these questions should *not* be used as a questionnaire. You might need to skip certain questions because each food security assessment is different and it depends on your objective and the context. From these questions you can select those relevant to your own situation, and you can change the sequence of questions.

During the food security assessment, focus on the *changes*, even if it concerns a hypothetical change. Try to get information on a *normal year* (an average year that is neither good nor bad). Compare this to the current situation.

### Composition of community (demographic profile)

- Are the people residents of this area, since when? Are there refugees or displaced people? Have people moved out, when and why? What makes people stay here?
- How many households are there? What is their composition (for example, number of children, women and elderly)?
- Has anything changed recently concerning the movements of people? Why? Are certain household members leaving? Why and where are they going?
- What are the ethnic or tribal groups? Have there been any recent changes in this? Why?
- Do men live in the community year round? If not, why do they move?

Do some **mapping** if you can (see Annex 3).

### History and sequence of events

- Have there been major changes recently, including sudden hazards, slow development of a crisis or fighting? When did this take place?

Make a **timeline** if you can (see Annex 7).

### How people make their living

- In general and in normal years: What are the major agricultural activities? Which crops are grown, cash or food crops? Who does what on the land? Who has access to land? Who owns the land?
- What are the types of livestock? Who owns them? Do herds move, when and where? How big are the average herds for poor and wealthy people?
- What other types of income exist? What labour is there, for money or goods? Who works as a labourer?
- Have people received aid in recent years, why and how?
- How do different people in the community earn an income? What are the different livelihood groups? (Make sure you are able to build a typology or profile of the different livelihood groups in the community.)
- How has all of this changed? How might this change (in case of disaster preparedness assessment)?

### Agriculture (more specific)

- What is the harvest in a normal year? What will it be this year? What is the percentage of crops planted (now and in a normal year)? How is the crop performance? What agricultural problems do the people face? Is this exceptional, why?

- How much should the harvest be for a minimum income?
- What is the quality of the seeds, tools and fertilizers? Who owns the tools? Has anything changed recently?

Make a **year ranking** and **seasonal calendar** if you can (see Annexes 4 and 6).

### **Livestock (more specific)**

- Have there been changes in herd sizes? How is the availability of water and veterinary drugs?
- How is the milk and meat yield? Are there currently changes in that, why?
- What are major problems now and in a normal year? Are these exceptional, why?

Make a **year ranking** and **seasonal calendar** if you can (see Annexes 4 and 6).

### **Income**

- What are the main sources of income on average in a normal year (per livelihood group or per community if it is similar)? Does this change over the year, how? Has this recently changed, why and how? What income differences are there? What is a minimum income for a household of a given number of people?

*Examples of income categories:*

- sale of food crops and cash crops;
- milk and other dairy sales;
- livestock sales;
- labour (agriculture, construction);
- trade (transport, resale of goods);
- sale of wild foods;
- craftwork (mats, baskets, pots);
- gifts, zakat (gifts normally offered in Islamic communities); and
- other production and collection and sale (firewood, charcoal, grass).

Do a **proportional piling** if you can (see Annex 5).

### **Expenditures**

- What are the main costs for the people on average in a normal year (per livelihood group or per community if it is similar)? Does this change over the year, how? Has this recently changed, why and how?

*Examples of expenditure categories:*

- food (specify);
- firewood, charcoal, kerosene;
- household items (soap, clothes);
- transport fees;
- drinking water (for people, for animals);
- school fees;
- gifts or zakat;
- taxes;
- housing (rent);
- investment (livestock purchase or stocking);
- health (consultation and drugs for people, for animals); and
- miscellaneous (rent for land, seeds, fertilizers, tools, electricity, entertainment, alcohol).

Do a **proportional piling** if you can (see Annex 5).

### **How do people obtain their food?**

- In a normal year, how do people obtain their food? Does this change over the year, how? Has this recently changed, why and how?



*Examples of food source categories:*

- own crop production;
- purchase;
- own livestock products (milk, meat);
- exchange for labour or food for work;
- wild food collection;
- milk and other dairy sales;
- gifts of food;
- food aid;
- barter (exchange one product for another);
- loans;
- stocks;
- food at work, at school; and
- fishing, hunting.

Do a **proportional piling** if you can (see Annex 5).

### **Labour (for wages or food)**

- What kind of labour opportunities do people have? Who does what? Has this changed recently? Why and how?
- What are the average salaries in a normal year and now?
- Do children work in a normal year? What kind of work? Has this changed recently?
- Is it difficult to get work?

### **Food consumption patterns**

- What is the average family diet in a normal year? Who is responsible for meeting the food needs? What is the number of meals? Who prepares these and how?
- Where does the food come from (production, market, exchange, donation, solidarity)?
- Who eats what? Are there differences in diet between children, women and men? What are they?
- Are there seasonal shortages of food in the household in a normal year? What do people do to meet their food needs then? Do you normally collect wild foods, what kind?
- Has there been any change recently in the people's diets, since when and how? Why?
- What do people do to avoid food shortage in the family?

Do a **proportional piling** if you can (see Annex 5).

### **Market prices and evolution**

- Can you give me prices of important commodities (cash crops, food crops, as well as sugar, salt, vegetables)? What were the prices a year ago of these commodities? Do you see any strong trends over the last few months or years? Why?
- Do you think the prices will fall or rise? Why?
- How is the access to market? What are the main market days? Have there been any changes in people selling or buying? Why?

Ask the same questions about livestock, milk and meat.

- What is the livestock/grain ratio, for example, how much grain do you need to buy one goat? Has this changed over time? When, how and why?

Make a **table or figure** with some current prices and prices from past years (see Annex 9).

### **Perception of main problems**

- At the moment, what do you think are the main problems for the community? Can you describe them?
- Has this always been the case? If not, when and how has this changed and why? Will these problems become worse, why?
- What did people do in the past to overcome these problems? What are they doing now?

Do a **pair-wise ranking** if you can (see Annex 6).

### **General issues, including health and water**

- Who is engaged in firewood or coal collection or purchase? Is it difficult to obtain this? Have there been any recent changes?
- Who collects water, how is the quality of the drinking water? Where do the people collect water? Is it far and safe? Is there enough?
- Are there any seasonal diseases? What are their local names and symptoms? Has there been a change in this pattern, if so, how and why? Have there been any major disease outbreaks?
- Where are the functioning health centres? Do people attend these, if not, why?
- Do people need to pay for drugs or for consultation, how much? Have there been any changes in this?

Do some **mapping** if you can (see Annex 3).

### **Infrastructure, including transport, housing and school**

- Have there been any changes recently in the quality of road, housing, school or transport (buses, trucks)? What were these changes?
- Who is affected and why? What do people do to cope with this?

Do some **mapping** if you can (see Annex 3).

### **Daily activity pattern**

- On average, what are the daily activities for men, for women, for children? Has this changed recently, how and why?
- Do children attend school, if not why?

Make an **activity profile** if you can (see Annex 8).

### **Security**

- Does the community feel safe here? If not, why? Have there been any recent changes?
- Is looting a major problem, for whom?
- Are there internal conflicts?

### **Miscellaneous**

- Have any other organizations been in the community to do an assessment? If so, who, when and did they provide aid?
- Will people migrate when the situation does not change or becomes worse? To where?
- Ask other questions depending on your objectives and the situation.

#### **Tip**

#### **Exchange information with colleagues**

After every interview it is good to *exchange* a few findings with your team *and their impressions*. You can do this with colleagues who are doing interviews with different people or with your translator. If you come across contradictions, try to verify information with additional questions in the community. It also helps to sit down with your team and discuss findings at the end of every assessment day.

## Step 4: Analysis

Now that you have collected the information, you need to analyse your findings.

Before you begin the analysis you need to:

- re-read all your notes and score, compare the areas, the communities, prioritize what you think are important problems; and
- have a team meeting in which you discuss everybody's impressions, findings and compare areas and communities.

The crucial part is whether you are able to answer the questions you set out to reach in the objectives of your food security assessment. Do you *understand* the food security situation of the people and do they *need* assistance from the National Society? If so, what kind of assistance?

Following is a list of key questions you should now be able to answer with the information you collected from primary and secondary sources. You do not have to go into enormous detail to answer each question.

### Tip

Be careful with generalizations:

- if the areas you assessed were very heterogeneous in terms of livelihood strategies, ethnicity, demographics; or
- if you had many constraints in visiting areas (for political reasons, physical access problems).

### Situation before a crisis

- What are the different livelihood groups? Can you describe their main characteristics?
- How did the different livelihood groups acquire food and/or income before the crisis? For an average year in the recent past, what were their sources of food and income? Can you give a percentage for each source?
- How did these different sources of food and income vary between seasons in a normal year? Can you construct an average seasonal calendar for each livelihood group?
- Looking back over the past 5 or 10 years, how has food security varied from year to year? Can you construct a timeline or history of good and bad years as well as of the main problems/incidents if related to the crisis?
- Do the different livelihood groups normally own some assets (food stocks, cash savings, livestock, equipment, investments, unclaimed debt)?
- Over a period of a week or a month, what do household expenditures include, and what proportion is spent on each item? Who is normally responsible for management of cash in the household?
- How accessible is the nearest market for obtaining basic goods (consider distance, security, transport means)?
- What is the availability and price of essential goods, including food in a normal year?
- Prior to the crisis, what were the average 'exchange rates' such as livestock/grain ratio, how much food was received in exchange for work?
- What is the food consumption pattern in a normal year? Can you give percentages for each source? Is wild food part of a normal diet and to what extent?

### Situation during a crisis

- How has the crisis affected the different sources of food and income for each of the livelihood groups? Can you give percentages for each source?
- How has it affected the usual seasonal patterns of food security for the different groups?
- How has it affected access to markets, market availability and prices of essential goods?
- For different livelihood groups, what are the different coping strategies and what proportion (majority, half, minority) of people are engaged in them?

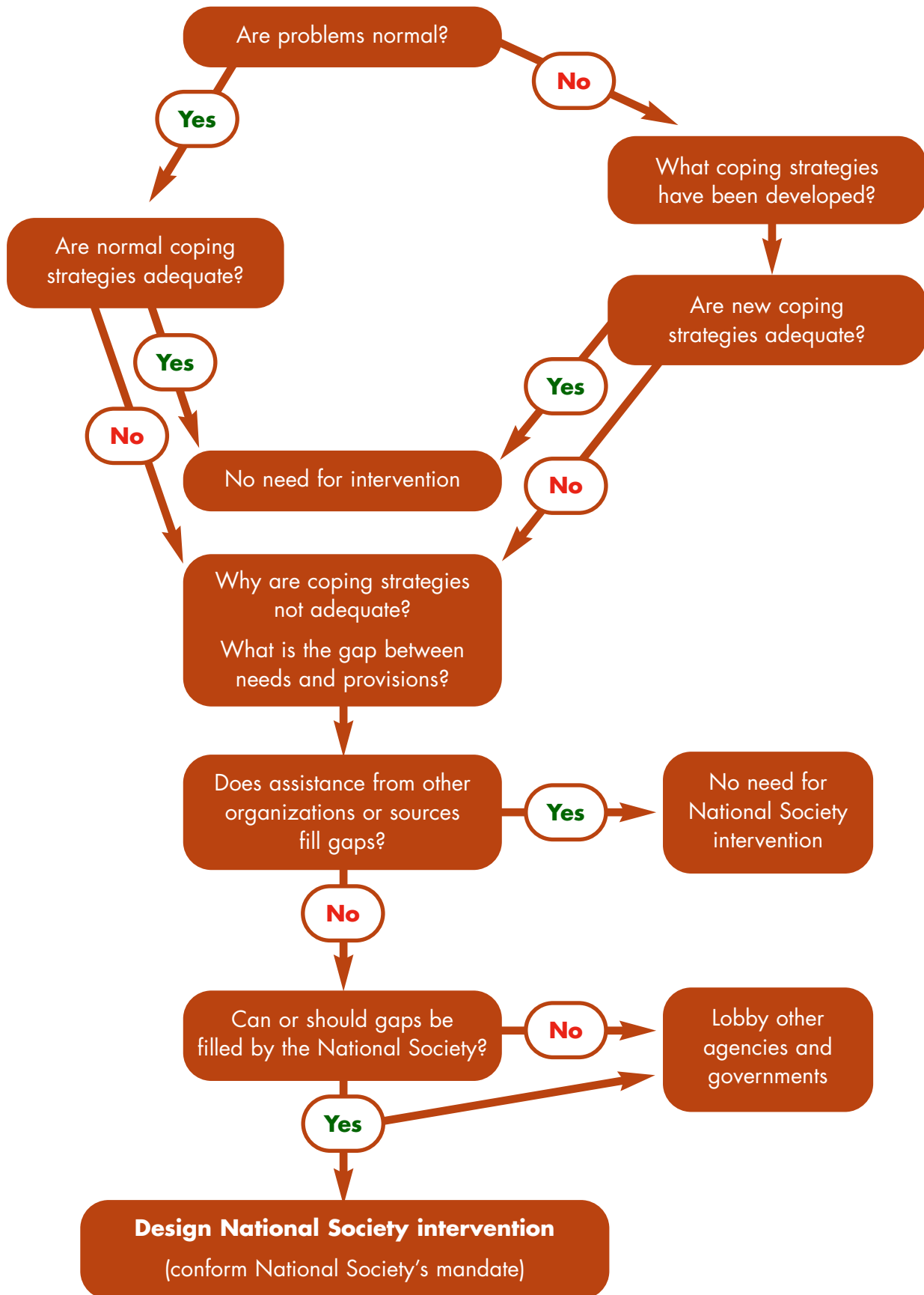
- How has this changed as compared with the pre-crisis situation?
- Which group or population is most affected?
- How has the food consumption pattern changed? And for who has it changed? Can you give percentages for each source?
- Are there major changes in the previously mentioned ‘exchange rates’?
- Is there a big change in the number of children working and the kind of work they are doing?
- What are the short- and medium-term effects of coping strategies on people’s financial and other assets? How long do you estimate they can last with these coping strategies? Do you think people will migrate, to where?
- For all livelihood groups, and all vulnerable groups, what are the effects of coping strategies on their health, general well-being and dignity? Are there risks associated with coping strategies?
- Can you describe the current situation of the people’s health, quality and quantity of water, housing?
- If malnutrition is a big problem, can you identify the causes?
- Can you describe the current infrastructure as well as a kind of map with marked areas where people are currently living, (possibly with clinics, schools and other points of interest), rivers, roads, rails?
- Can you describe the current demographics of the areas (approximate numbers of households, ethnic groups or tribes, household composition)? Are many household members separated or still living together?
- What are the five biggest problems for each community in normal years and now?

You should now be able to draw conclusions on the food **availability** for communities; who has **access** and does not, and on the **utilization** of food at household level and how this has changed over time and why.

You should also be able to indicate who the potential **vulnerable groups** are with regard to food insecurity.

Having answered most of the above questions you are now able to answer the questions in the following diagram. This will help you ascertain if your National Society needs to provide assistance to the communities and what kind of assistance this should be.





If assistance is needed from the National Society, draft ideas for different options and include arguments for and against the various options. Also make an estimation of the volume and duration of the assistance. (For more guidelines on planning assistance, see the *Project Planning Process handbook*).





Yoshi Shimizu / International Federation



# 6 How to compile a food security assessment report

In your food security assessment report, include the following components, in this order.

## Executive summary

A very short description (maximum of 2-3 pages) of the food security assessment in which you write the main findings. Normally you write this when you have finished your whole report.

## List of contents

- List of main sections of the report with their page numbers

## Introduction

- Why this food security assessment was done
- The objectives

## Background

- Brief description of the context, pre-crisis and crisis situation

## Methodology

- Timeframe of the assessment
- Background and number of assessors
- Selection criteria for the sites
- How *secondary* information was collected; what were the sources
- How *primary* information was collected:
  - Selection of key informants
  - Composition of focus or other discussion groups
  - Criteria for selecting informants
  - What techniques were used

## Results

- Practical constraints of the assessment
- Description of coverage of the assessment, including its geographic spread, the range of *livelihood groups* included and other relevant description of the *population*, such as gender, ethnicity, tribal group, displaced people or refugees
- The assessment report results should cover most questions you answered in the **Analysis** section, with clear emphasis on how food security has changed (or will change) due to the crisis, how people are trying to cope and whether they are succeeding. Also include some broader issues such as on security, health, water and infrastructure. Make sure you try to *summarize* as much as you can, if findings between certain sites are similar describe them together. Describe particularly vulnerable livelihood groups or those who are vulnerable to food insecurity in the present situation. Make comparisons between communities. Also include causes of malnutrition if that is a major problem.

## Conclusions

- Conclusions on the food security situation concerning:
  1. Food *availability*
  2. Food *access*
  3. Food *utilization*
- Conclusions on the overall food security situation: your most important findings listed in bullet form

## Recommendations

- Suggestions for possible interventions, including means of implementation and advocacy. Clearly include the reasons behind these suggestions. If you recommend assistance from the National Society try to describe the purpose and duration, and if possible the advantages and disadvantages of each suggested intervention as well as constraints. Also include the assistance you think should be provided in the short term and long term, and why, financial requirements and general strategy.
- Suggestions for any additional assessments if required: specify the areas and the priority topics for an additional assessment.

## Annexes

- Maps of the area
- Time schedule of assessment activities and areas visited
- List of secondary and primary information sources. List the documents you used, people who you interviewed; not necessarily everybody's names but more their function or role and who they represent. For example, representatives of government ministries, traditional leaders, representatives of key organizations (NGOs, UN, ICRC, women's groups).
- Assessment tools and checklists
- Description of each assessment in each community (extract of your notes). If you visited 10 different areas or communities and in each you had a few focus group discussions and a few household visits and one or two key-informant interviews, then write down all those comments under each area section. Include all your findings, including results from proportional piling, seasonal calendar and year ranking. This means your annexes might contain 10 different sections, one for each site, area or community.
- Photos if they are relevant. If you have photos that illustrate the consequences of the crisis you could consider including them in your report.



# 7 References

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# 8 Annexes

## Annex 1

### How to do a MUAC measurement

MUAC stands for mid-upper-arm circumference. You can measure MUAC if you want to know if many children in the area are **acutely malnourished**.

Acutely malnourished children have not had enough quantity and quality of food for some weeks because there was no food, or the child was very ill and did not eat enough because of lost appetite, or could not absorb enough because of chronic diarrhoea. They lacked enough calories for their bodies and therefore their bodies started 'eating' their own muscles causing, for example, their arm muscles to shrink. Their arms become thinner; this process is called 'wasting'.

Children with low MUAC have a high risk on dying. MUAC measurements can be used as a quick screening technique in emergency situations on acute malnutrition. Measuring MUAC is relatively easy to do and used especially for young children of **1-5 years (12-60 months)**. The measurement does not cause any pain; you can compare it with measuring weight or height.

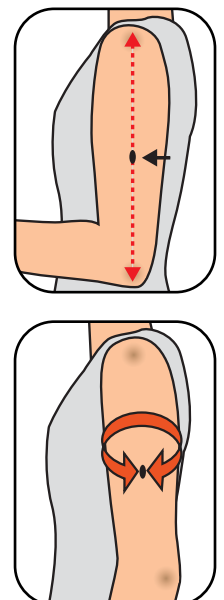
Usually you measure the circumference from the left mid-upper arm which normally does not change much between the ages of 1 and 5 years, but which wastes rapidly with malnutrition. The technique is not suitable for monitoring and evaluating if children are getting better after they receive more food. It is really only good for finding out quickly in a group of small children if the child is at high risk of dying from severe malnutrition. Boys and girls are measured in the same way.

If you measure a low MUAC you will not know the *cause of the malnutrition*; as mentioned above it can have different causes. In your food security assessment it is very important to try to find out if the malnutrition is caused by illness, lack of food in the family, chronic diarrhoea or some other reason. After all, if you bring in food aid for these children, and the cause of their thinness is severe illness with loss of appetite, your food aid will not be able to help them much.

### How to measure MUAC

#### Step 1

Keep your work at eye level. Sit down or kneel when possible. Very young children can be held by their mother during this procedure. Ask the mother to remove clothing that may cover the child's left arm. **Firstly, it is important to determine the place where you want to measure the circumference.** Calculate the mid-point of the child's left upper arm by first locating the tip of the child's shoulder with your finger tips (arrows 1 and 2 on the following page). Bend the child's elbow to make a right angle and find the tip of the elbow (arrow 3). Place the beginning of the measuring tape at the tip of the shoulder (arrow 4) and pull the tape straight down past the tip of the elbow (arrow 5). Read the number at the tip of the elbow to the nearest *centimetre*. Divide this number by two to estimate the mid-point. As an alternative, bend the tape in two from the elbow to the shoulder to estimate the mid-point. A piece of string can also be used for this purpose. Either you or an assistant can mark the mid-point with a pen on the arm (arrow 6).



### Step 2

Straighten the child's arm and let the arm hang loose and measure around the upper arm at the mid-point, making sure that the numbers are right side up. Make sure the tape is flat around the skin (arrow 7). Inspect the tension of the tape on the child's arm. Make sure the tape has the proper tension (arrow 7) and is not too tight or too loose (arrows 8 and 9). Repeat any steps as necessary.

### Step 3

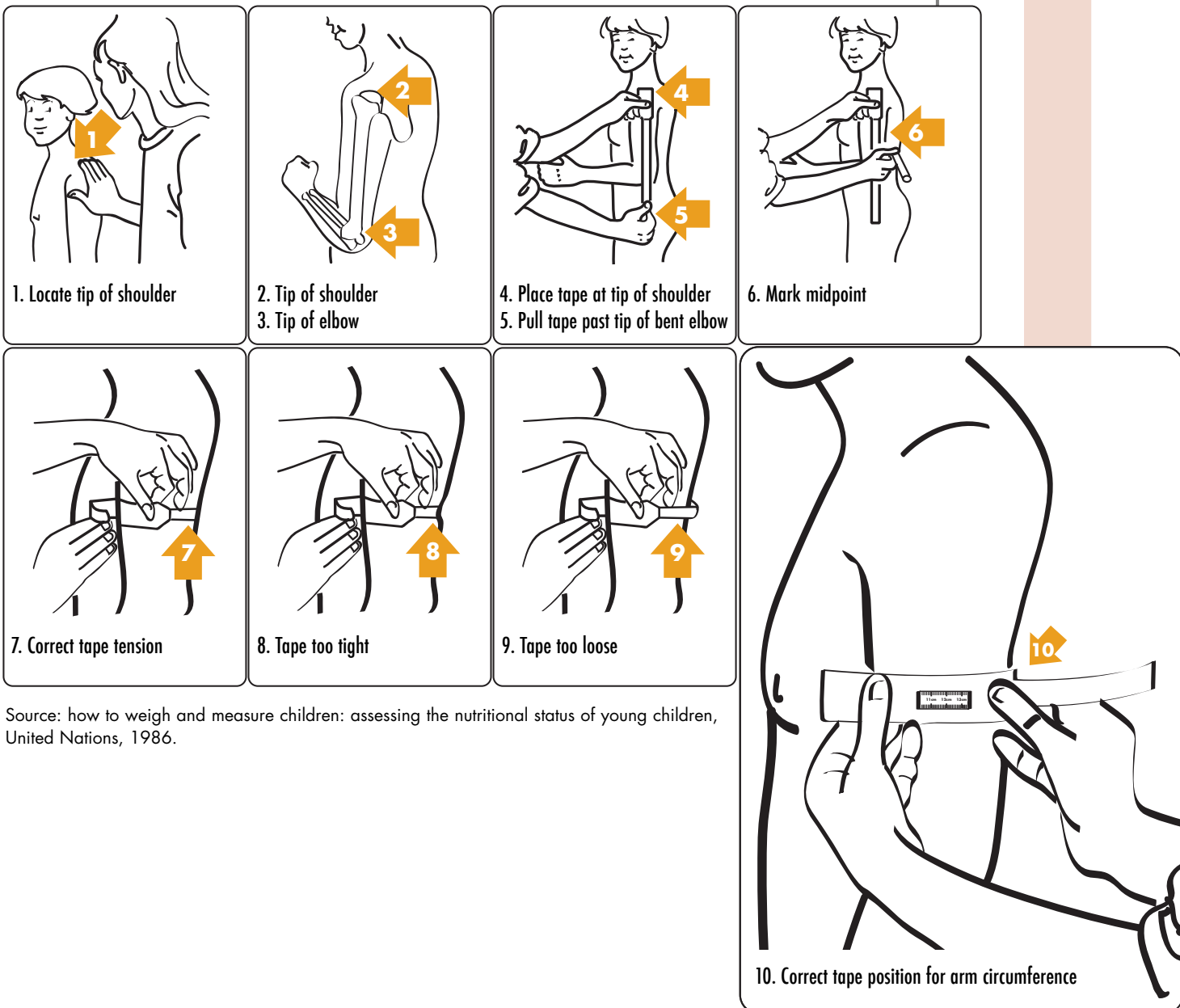
Once the tape is in the correct position, with the correct tension, read the measurement in **centimetres** (cm) to the nearest 0.1cm (arrow 10). If you have an assistant tell them the result, and have them write it down immediately and make sure that it has been recorded accurately. Loosen the tape on the child's arm and remove it.

Sources:

Adjusted from FANTA: Anthropometric Indicators Measurement Guide, 2003, revised edition.

[http://www.fantaproject.org/downloads/pdfs/anthro\\_5.pdf](http://www.fantaproject.org/downloads/pdfs/anthro_5.pdf)

Adjusted from BAPEN: Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool, <http://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/Must/MUST-page6.pdf>

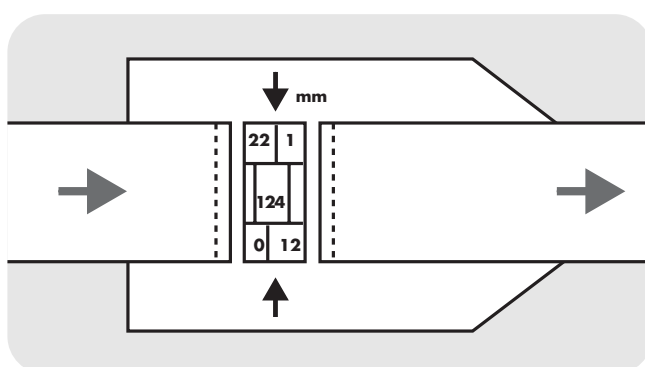


Source: how to weigh and measure children: assessing the nutritional status of young children, United Nations, 1986.

There are different MUAC measurement tapes, some measure in centimetres (cm), as in the above example, some measure in **millimetres** (mm). On some tapes **colours** are added to help quickly classifying in severe, moderate acute or absence of malnutrition. The technique used for measuring is the same, regardless of the tape you use; only the unit of measurement varies (centimetres or millimetres) and should be noted and consistent to avoid confusion.

The difference between centimetres and millimetres is a factor of 10. For example, 12 cm equals 120 mm and 114 mm equals 11.4 cm.

The figure on previous page (arrow 10) shows a reading in centimetres. In the figure below, the example is in millimetres (mm).



Here is an example of a reading in millimetres. Read the number in the box which is completely visible in the middle window. The MUAC is 124 mm, which equals 12.4 cm.

Source: <http://www.refugeecamp.org/learnmore/nutrition/muac.htm>

Whether you read the result in cm or mm, you can now check whether the child you just measured has severe, moderate or mild acute malnutrition. Look at the table below and see in which category your result falls and mark the category with a cross.

You can use this table to fill in your results from your assessment.

Nutritional status	MUAC coloured tape	MUAC in centimetres (cm)	MUAC in millimetres (mm)	Results (number of children per category)
Severe acute malnutrition	Red	Less than 11 cm	Less than 110 mm	
Moderate acute malnutrition	Orange	11–12.4 cm	110–124 mm	
Mild or no acute malnutrition	Yellow Green	Greater than or equal to 12.5 cm	Greater than or equal to 125 mm	
				<b>Total number of children measured:</b>

**Examples:**

- If you measure one child’s MUAC, and the measurement reads 11.3 cm, this child is moderately acute malnourished since the result falls in between 11–12.4 cm.
- If you measure another child’s MUAC, and the measurement reads 13.3 cm, this child is mildly or not acute malnourished since the result is equal to or greater than 12.5 cm.
- If you measure another child’s MUAC, and the measurement reads 12.5 cm, this child is mildly or not acute malnourished since the result falls in the category 12.5 cm and higher.

When you fill in your table, it will look like this:

Nutritional status	MUAC coloured tape	MUAC in (cm)	MUAC in (mm)	Results (number of children per category)
Severe acute malnutrition	Red	<11 cm	< 110 mm	
Moderate acute malnutrition	Orange	11–12.4 cm	110–124 mm	X
Mild or no malnutrition	Yellow Green	≥ 12.5 cm	≥ 125 mm	XX
				<b>Total of children measured:</b>

You will eventually count all the children for each category and can then conclude that the total number of children that suffer from severe acute malnutrition, and from moderate acute malnutrition and how many children are not malnourished. If you can, you can express the results also as **percentages**.

The following table shows an example of a completed table where 20 children between the ages of 1-5 years were measured.

Nutritional status	MUAC coloured tape	MUAC in (cm)	MUAC in (mm)	Results (number of children per category)
Severe acute malnutrition	Red	<11 cm	< 110 mm	XXXXX
Moderate acute malnutrition	Orange	11–12.4 cm	110–124 mm	XXXXXX XX
Mild or no malnutrition	Yellow Green	≥ 12.5 cm	≥ 125 mm	XXXXXX X
				<b>Total of children measured:</b> <b>20</b>

Five children out of 20 are severely acute malnourished:  $5/20 \times 100 = 25$  per cent

Eight children out of 20 are moderately acute malnourished:  $8/20 \times 100 = 40$  per cent

Seven children out of 20 are mildly or not acute malnourished:  $7/20 \times 100 = 35$  per cent

Make sure you request **additional technical support** when you are measuring MUAC and drawing conclusions from the results!



## Annex 2

### Examples of terms of reference

Following are examples of terms of reference. See page 24 for a standardized list of key points that should be included in a terms of reference.

**Description of background** and context of situation in which food security assessment will take place: Include National Society activities in the area or country to date; a brief history of the situation; and a current description of the present situation.

#### Example

##### **Eritrea Background**

Eritrea is a food insecure country. On an average, in good years, the country produces only 60-70 per cent of its total food needs and in poor years not more than 25 per cent. The chronic and acute food insecurity is a result of poverty, drought and a difficult political situation.

The underlying causes of national food insecurity include lack of foreign currency with which to import food, lack of capacity to forecast droughts and impending food shortages and lack of capacity to store and transport food.

Main causes of food insecurity at the household level include short and erratic rainfall which results in crop failure, lack of food in the markets, lack of capacity to produce food or earn income to purchase food, lack of nutritional knowledge, sanitation and proper child care practices, cultural practices that deny food to particular groups. Long-term factors such as environmental degradation, high population growth, diminishing land holding size and lack of on-farm technological innovation has led to a significant decline in productivity per household.

**Red Cross intervention so far:** In 2003-2004, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea following the joint assessment undertaken by the Government, UN organizations and other NGOs and involving a fact finding team from the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, appealed to support 45,000 people in 2003, and 50,000 people in 2004 in one of the highly drought affected area of Zoba Anseba, Hagaz Sub-Zoba through Federation appeals. The intervention included monthly dry food distribution based on...

#### Example

##### **West Africa Background**

A serious food crisis is developing in most of the Sahel countries, especially Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. The causes are a combination of unfavourable weather conditions and a massive locust invasion in 2004, which was the worst in the past 20 years.

The FAO took the lead role in fighting the locusts, mainly by spraying pesticides from aircrafts. However, this came too late for many farmers especially in isolated geographical areas. The effects are most severe in communities who already have limited coping mechanisms and thereby enhance their food insecurity. As per the estimates of the FAO, about 9.3 million people are negatively affected by the combined impact of the locusts and reduced rainfall. Up to 60 per cent of the households in Mauritania are food insecure or highly vulnerable to food insecurity; in Niger 3.5 million people are affected (31 per cent of the total population), in Burkina Faso 3 million and in Mali, 1.7 million. As the locust swarms are very likely to come back in a larger number this may lead to a devastating impact for the vulnerable communities due to the already fragile food security situation in the Sahel countries.

The Federation's Regional Delegation for West and Central Africa is in the process of defining its role and input for the present situation and preparedness for a potential invasion. The National Societies of the affected countries have requested assistance from the Regional Delegation. However, financial and human resources at both at the Regional Delegation and the National Societies are too scarce to address the issue properly. The National Societies of the concerned countries have suggested certain activities to respond to the situation, such as in-depth analysis of the situation, assistance with food and cereal banks, the mobilization of volunteers of the local committees and sensitization and awareness programmes among the most affected populations. However, a more concrete strategy and a plan of action based on the capacities of the Federation in the region as well as the National Societies needs to be developed. An assessment mission in the following affected countries is being proposed: Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

**Objective of the assessment:** What is the purpose? What exactly does the assessment need to find out?

#### **Eritrea Objective**

To define the magnitude of food assistance needed for Eritrea by the National Society for the current year and the coming year as well as exploring and defining other options to improve food security.

Example

See also Section 5 How to define food security objectives.

**List of activities** the team or person must undertake

#### **West Africa List of activities**

Take stock of all relevant assessment reports and recommendations carried out by WFP, CILSS, FAO and other organizations on locust invasion on the upcoming food crises in the Sahel countries.

Review actions taken by the concerned National Society since August 2004 (beginning of the locust invasion).

Assess current and additional capacity requirements of the National Societies to implement recommendations and review past experiences of interventions.

Recommend areas of intervention of the National Societies on food security based on their past experiences and existing capacity.

Together with the National Society update the disaster response plans with view of food security and develop a detailed plan of action for Red Cross assistance programme.

Coordinate and cooperate closely with WFP, FAO and other organizations which are planning or are already implementing activities on food security.

Assess the capacity of the Federation in the region to support the assistance to the National Society to address food security.

Develop recommendations for the Federation Regional Delegation on ways of support to National Societies and interventions on food security until December 2005.

Example

See also section 5 How to define food security objectives.

Some examples of **expected output**: a list of recommendations for provision of food aid, a plan for meeting the food security needs, a report on how the National Society should respond to this crisis concerning food security.

Examples of **expected output** include:

- a report with all the findings of the food security assessment which includes recommendations on food security assistance to be undertaken by the National Society;
- an action plan, both short and long term, of suggestions for food security assistance; or
- a report with a food security analysis of the assessment area with an identification of the most vulnerable groups as well as suggestions how to assist them.

**Time period**: total number of weeks required to do the assessment and write up the results.

Examples of **time period** include:

- six weeks including assessment, report writing and presentation of the final report and recommendations to the Regional Delegation; or
- three weeks food security assessment and one week for reporting.

**Composition of team**: In the case of the terms of reference, this should outline the whole team. List the expertise of the different members of your team.

Following are examples of **team composition**:

- The food security assessment is a part of a greater assessment: the whole assessment team will consist of one team leader, one food security person, one water and sanitation person and one health person.
- The food security assessment team is composed of two food security officers, one local language translator and one local branch volunteer.







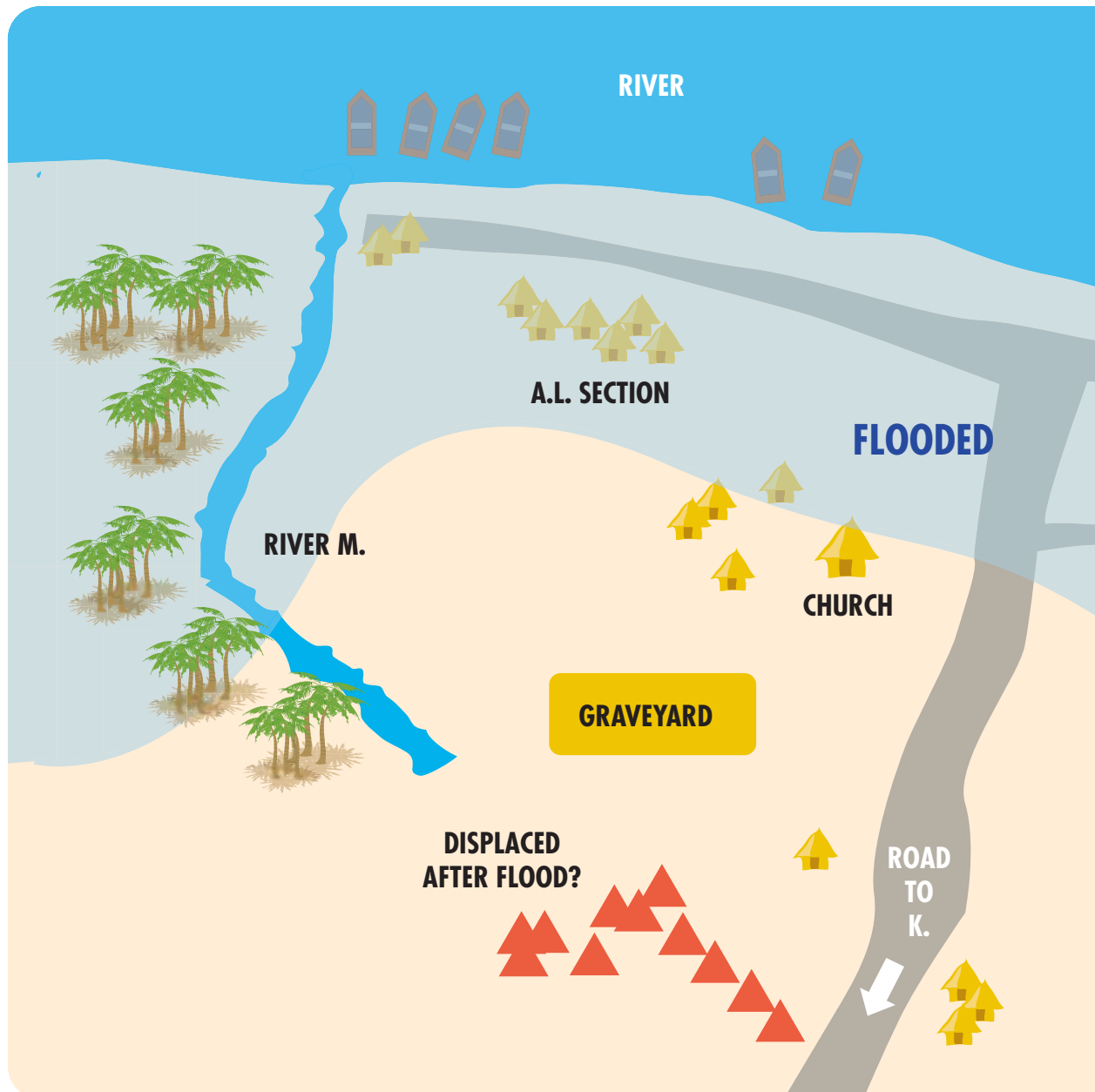
## Annex 3

### How to do mapping

Maps can be used for many different purposes and therefore can vary in the amount of detail.

Following are some reasons to make a map during your food security assessment:

- To make sure you find your way back to the area where you did your assessment: this is especially important if you need to provide assistance. Your map will need to include some landmarks, important roads, rivers, bridges, possible barriers, other important villages and sites.
- To make a visual representation of the main areas affected by a disaster: your map needs to contain marked areas that are, for example, affected by flood or an earthquake, areas where people have moved in order to seek refuge, and main roads which are blocked and where they are still accessible.
- To use at a later stage if you plan assistance: your map could include details such as water sources, religious meeting places, schools, shops, markets, fields, areas where livestock are kept,



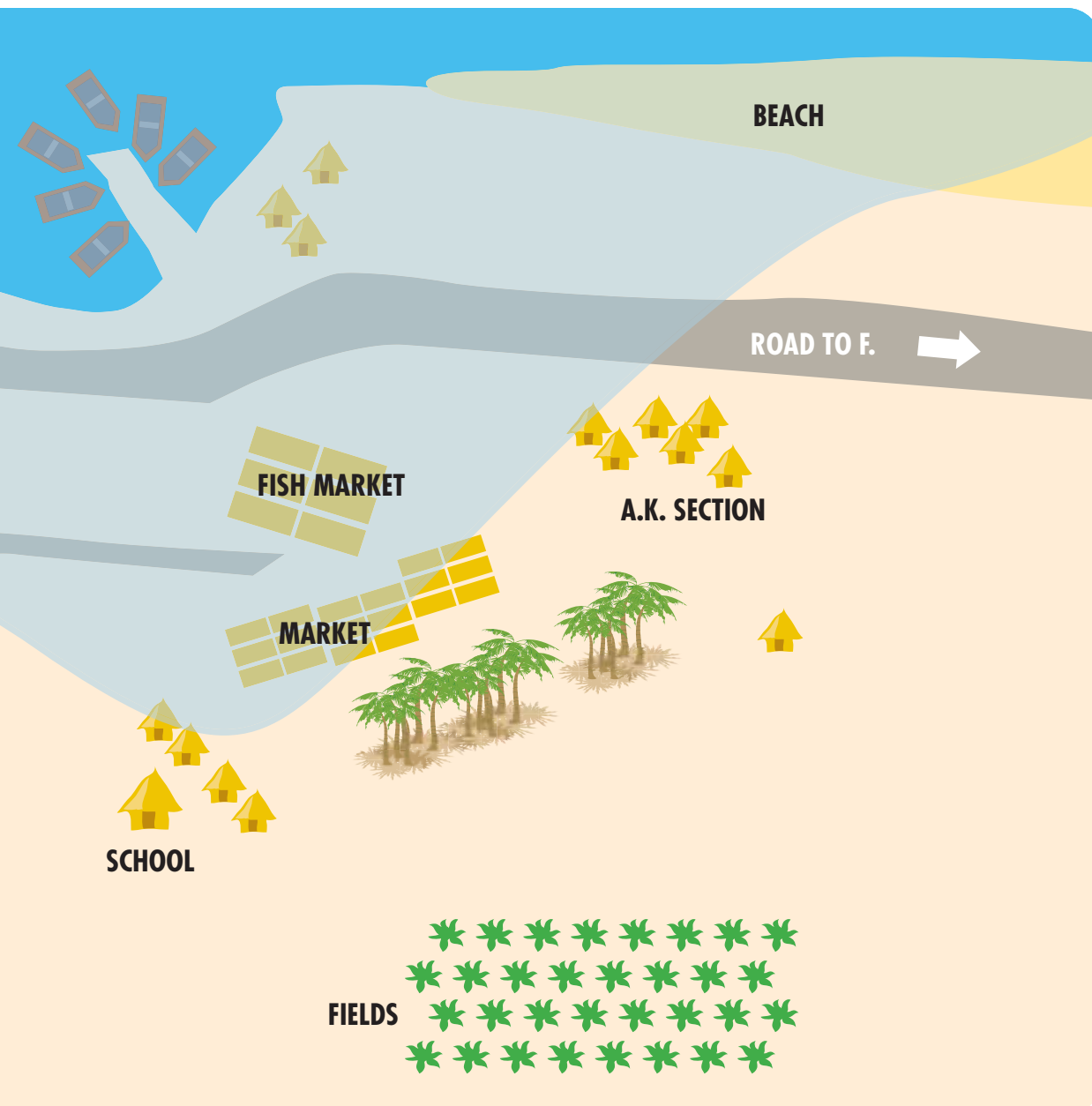


areas accommodating particular social or ethnic groups, new arrivals and areas of restricted access. This is especially important if you plan to provide food aid in order, to determine the site for providing and storing food. It should not be too far from people, at a site that everybody can find, not too close to animals and not too remote, to reduce the chance of theft.

You can make the map yourself or you can ask the community or a key-informant to help you. If you already have an existing printed map of the area, you can use it and fill in the aspects you think are important.

**Example of a map of a flooded village**

The following map shows that residential areas are especially affected by a flooded river and that the market places have also become temporarily unusable. In addition, it appears that villages F and K are no longer linked by road. The fields are not affected. The map also shows where the people are relocated in some make shift dwellings. The map can assist you in selecting where to do your food security assessment. Facts that you may want to verify include who the displaced people are, and where they come from, whether the fishing activities are totally stopped, whether the road is indeed totally unusable, and the consequences of this for the community.



## Annex 4

### How to make a seasonal calendar

It is very common for the food security situation to fluctuate within a 12 month calendar year. Food availability is very closely related to seasonality as food may be plentiful at the time of harvest and scarce at other times. This is true for agricultural and livestock products as well as fish and aquatic products, game and forest products and vegetables, fruits and other wild foods.

Identifying times of the year when there is an abundance of food available is a key step to understanding the times of year food may be scarce. With a seasonal calendar the people can describe the seasonal factors relating to food security, such as the production cycle of different food crops (planting, weeding and harvesting), the production of different livestock products, labour demands, rainfall, disease patterns, food price increases, and animal or population movements.

This is useful in showing seasonal differences in food availability, access and utilization for the communities.

Reasons to use a seasonal calendar in a food security assessment include:

- to identify the 'hunger gap';
- to identify a normal period of plenty (often just after the harvest);
- to identify whether at a particular time of year the situation can be expected to improve, or deteriorate and who will be particularly vulnerable, and when;
- to help you to plan possible interventions so that they fit in with local schedules. Examples of this include the timing of a seed distribution or the distribution of food, which may be affected by the state of roads at certain times of the year. You can also take into account people's workload and plan joint activities accordingly. For example, during planting and harvesting times people tend to be very busy so we should not plan too many large participatory events at these times; and
- to compare a normal year with the current situation.

Examples of information you can put in a **seasonal calendar** include:

- rainfall (amount and intensity);
- population movement;
- animal movements;
- income flow;
- disease patterns;
- weather including wind storms and temperature;
- harvests;
- workload; and
- food price increases.

A seasonal calendar can be drawn on the ground using sticks and stones, or on a large sheet of paper. It needs to take into account local concepts of time, such as rainy seasons.

How to construct a seasonal calendar:

- As preparation, make a preliminary list of the elements you want the calendar to describe, such as weeding, planting, harvesting, rainy seasons, migration and malaria.
- The calendar can be compiled with a mixed group of people containing representatives from all the livelihood groups or with separate livelihoods groups and individuals. You select the group.
- Decide whether to draw on the ground or on paper, and find a suitable space.
- Draw a horizontal line across the top of the cleared space (or paper) and explain that the line represents one year.
- Ask participants to divide the year into either months or seasons, whichever has more meaning for them, and to mark the appropriate divisions along the line.
- Ask the group to identify events significant to the community, such as religious festivals.
- Start the calendar by asking about rainfall patterns; ask participants to put stones or beans under each period (month or season) to represent relative amounts of rainfall; more stones equal more rain.

- Draw a line under this section of the calendar.
- Next ask them to mark when they normally plant and harvest their main crop.
- Ask them to do the same for other elements that are relevant to the food security of the groups concerned, for example, other crops and food gathering activities in descending order of importance; and employment opportunities and income-generating activities such as sales of labour, crops, animals and handicrafts.
- Ask participants to rank each period in terms of the quantity of household food stores or cash; the larger the food and cash stores the more stones should be used.

(Adapted from reference 1)

### Example of a seasonal calendar

Note: Black rounds can be stones, sticks, beans or leaves.

	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Rainfall		••	••			••						
Temperature	20		25	30	30	25		20	15	15		20
Plant maize	••	••					••	•				
Weeding												
Harvesting						••	••				•	••
Maize price		•	•	••	•••				•	•		
Household food stocks	decreasing			none		increasing						
Disease	Malaria and diarrhoea				Respiratory infections							

Source: Nutrition Works, food security training material 2003.

You can see from this calendar that in the months of January and February as the household food stocks are empty, grain is expensive and there is heavy weeding work load in the fields. The household food security is likely to be at its worst.

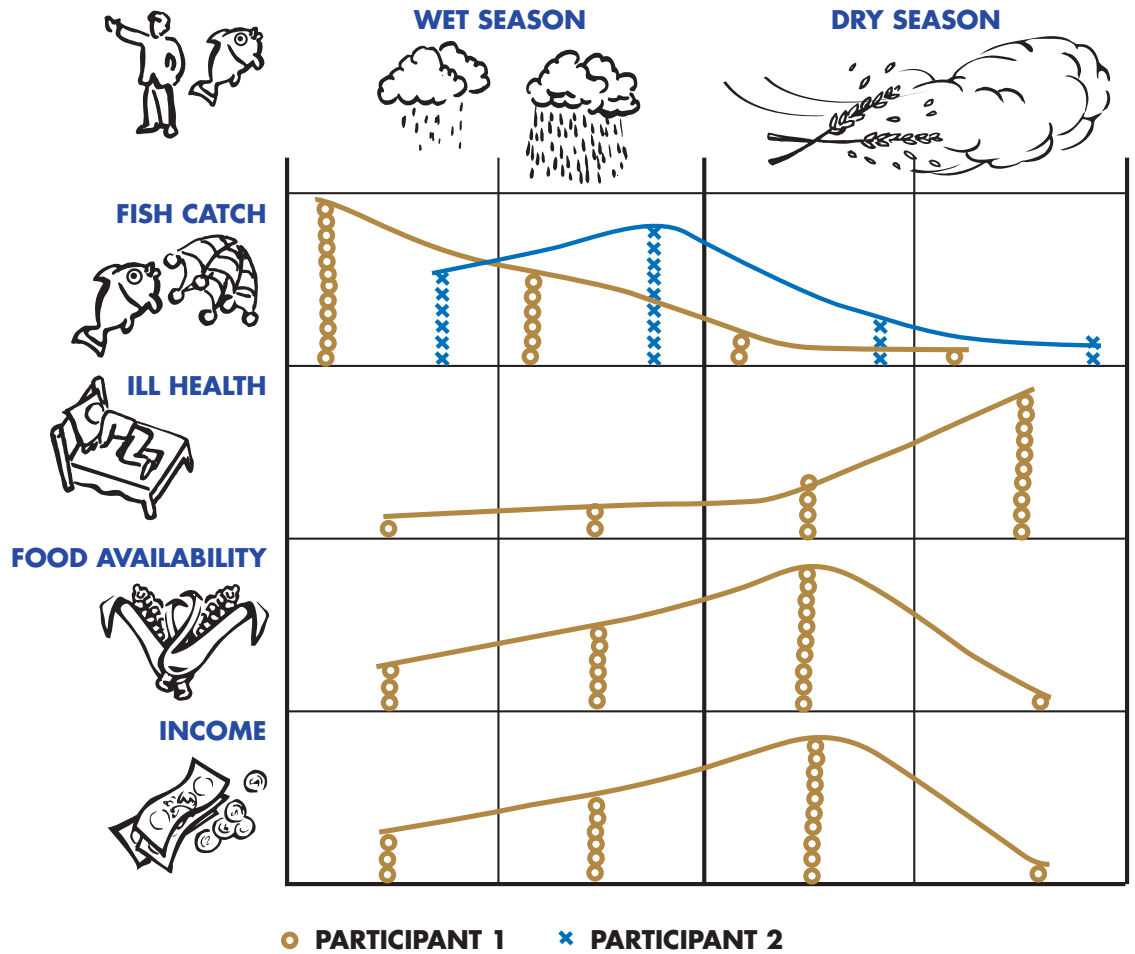
### Example from Rwanda

Following is a simple seasonal calendar with information mainly on rainfall and agricultural activities. For a food security assessment you may want to add some information on prices of the main food crops and household food stores.

Season B (long rain)						Season A (short rains)					
Planting			Harvesting			Planting			Harvesting		
February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January
				Planting			Harvesting				
Season C (marshlands)											

Source: FEWSNET 2004. <http://www.fews.net/centers/innerSections.aspx?f=rw&m=1001446&pageID=monthliesDoc>

Example of a country in Asia



Source: DoF/NACA-STREAM/FAO Workshop on Livelihoods Approaches and Analysis. Yangon, Myanmar 2004  
<http://www.streaminitiative.org/Library/pdf/myanmar/MyanmarReport.pdf>

This seasonal calendar was done by a key-informant, with assistance from another member of the community on fishing activities. It clearly shows that at the end of the dry season the families have less food security.

## Annex 5

### How to do proportional piling

Proportional piling helps you to estimate *quantities and proportions*, especially when you work with people who are not used to quantifying certain information. Proportional piling is often used to find out about the *relative importance* of different things. For example, you want to know the proportion of **income** that a family receives from several different sources, or what the family's main **expenditure** is; their **food consumption** or **ways of obtaining their food**.

In addition to helping us to quantify issues, proportional piling is a good facilitation tool. In a group, giving people an activity of this kind can break down barriers. It can also act as a focus for discussion. Typically there is a lot of debate about the relative size of the piles and this encourages participation and enhances accuracy.

It can be very useful to do such an exercise twice during the food security assessment, once referring to the *normal* situation, the situation before a crisis, and once referring to the *current* situation. In this way you can detect how a crisis has changed the situation.

It is important to note that you should not always do proportional piling for all of the subject areas of income, expenditure, food consumption, and how they obtain food. It will take a lot of time and people will lose interest. You can vary and choose the ones you do through proportional piling, as long as you do the same frequently throughout the assessment. In this way you can compare different groups and areas and differences over time for each group or area. However, it is certainly crucial to ask about food consumption patterns; make sure you always include this (especially during focus groups discussions with women).

To undertake a proportional piling, you will need about **100 dried beans** or stones, beads or anything similar of the same size. Make sure you have some in reserve since you are most likely to lose some during your travel. It is important to always start this technique with approximately 100.

#### Example: proportional piling for source of income

Explain the objective of the exercise to the people. That is, you would like to know what income sources they had in a *normal or average* year. Ask them to name their main sources of income.

List these and then ask them to divide up the beans according to the relative importance of each income source. They may have received income from selling milk and producing wheat, with wheat providing twice as much as milk. In this case, the wheat pile would contain about 70 beans, while the milk pile would contain about 30.

Then you could ask them to repeat this process with regard to their *current* income sources. For example, a bad harvest due to a drought might have reversed the situation: their income from milk is now twice as much while the wheat now only generates a small income.

#### Examples of sources of income:

- Crop sales
- Milk and other dairy sales
- Livestock sales
- Labour and employment for wages
- Sale of wild foods
- Trade (transport, resale of goods)
- Craft making (mats, baskets, pots)
- Sale of firewood, charcoal
- Gifts, allowance, *zakat*



**Example: proportional piling for sources of obtaining food**

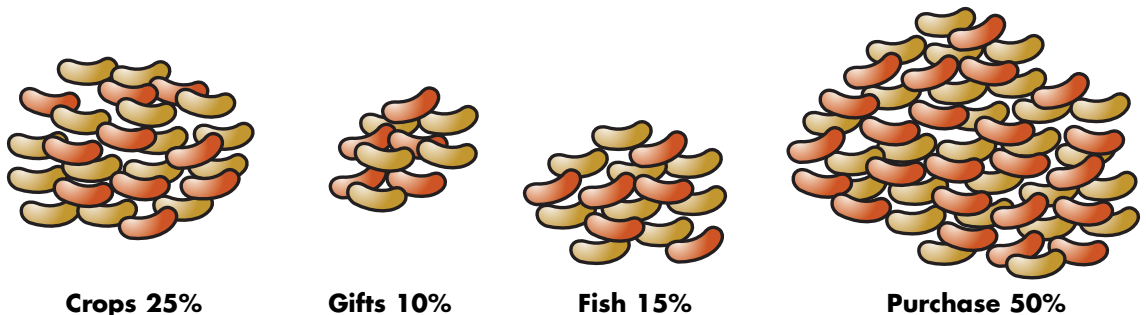
During a focus group discussion the people tell you that in *normal year* on average they obtain food in the following way:

- own crop production – they put 60 beans on that pile (meaning 60 per cent);
- purchase – they put 15 beans on that pile (meaning 15 per cent);
- fishing – they put 10 beans on that pile (meaning 10 per cent); and
- barter or exchange – they put 15 beans on that pile (meaning 15 per cent).

**Examples of sources of obtaining food:**

- Own crop production
- Own livestock products (milk, meat)
- Purchase or exchange in terms of labour (food for work)
- Wild food
- Fishing, hunting
- Gifts of food
- Barter
- Loans
- Stocks
- Relief food
- Food at work

The focus group does the same exercise for the *current* situation, this is the result:



Source: Reference 7

This means that the situation has changed: Their crops are not sufficient anymore to feed them and they need to purchase much more food nowadays. Originally they were purchasing 15 per cent of their food, now that figure has risen to 50 per cent. This may mean that people are using their assets to purchase food. Now you have to look more in-depth with the group to see to what extent this is a damaging coping mechanism in the long-term.

**Example: proportional piling for source of expenditure**

- Explain to the people that you would like to know the main expenditures in an average year.
- List the main ones. For example they may mention food, household items, drugs, school and health care. Ask them to place the highest number of beans for the highest expenses, and the lowest number of beans for the lowest expenses.
- Do the same exercise for their current expenses.

**Examples of sources of expenditure:**

- Food
- Household items (soap, clothes)
- Water
- Inputs: livestock drugs, water for livestock, rent for land, seeds, fertiliser, tools)
- Firewood, charcoal, fuel
- Gifts, zakat
- School (fees, material, uniform)
- Taxes
- Milling
- Medicine and consultations

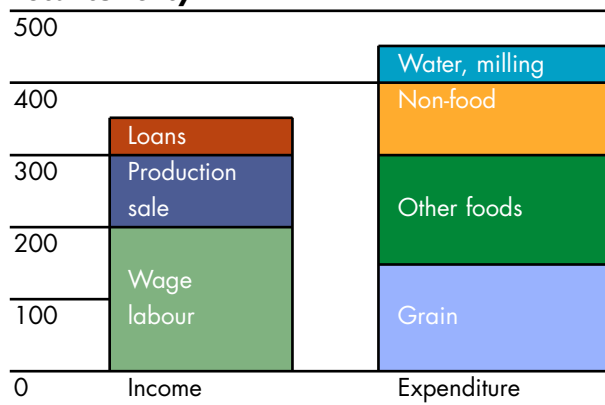
During the discussion people give you the following information:

Expenses in a normal year	Beans	Current expenses	Beans
Food	50	Food	74
Education	15	Education	8
Non-food items	13	Non-food items	5
Taxes	11	Taxes	9
Charity	5	Charity	1
Health	6	Health	3

Clearly this community has shifted its expenses towards food; from 50 per cent in a normal year to 74 per cent in the current situation.

Note: If you have both *income and expenditure patterns* in similarly-expressed values, you can make useful comparisons. For example, the community tells you that on average their **income** is 350 of the local currency, of which sale of production brings them in 100, wage labour 200, and they take loans for 50. Assuming they give you similar information for their **expenditure** (they spend 300 on food including grain, 50 on water and milling and 100 on non-food items), you can then make a comparison and see to what extent they are earning more than they spend, or vice versa.

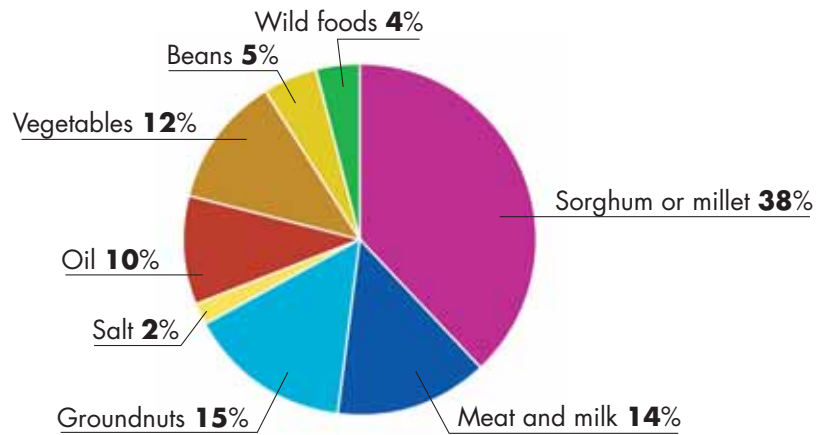
**Local currency**



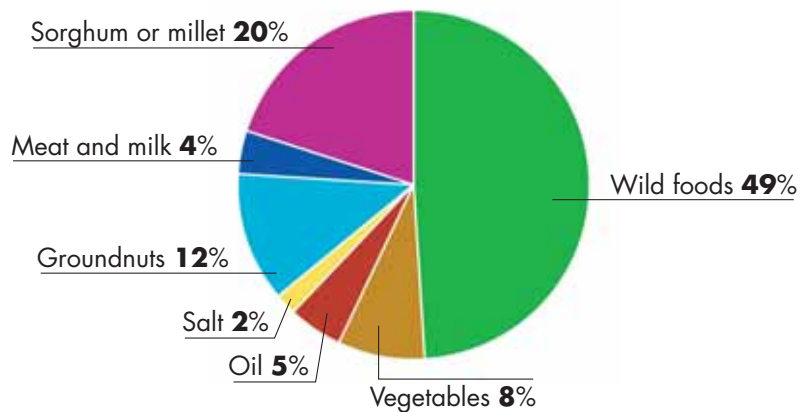
**Example: proportional piling for food consumption**

- Explain to the people that you would like to know what they normally eat in an average year.
- List the main food products and ask them to place the beans in proportion to the quantity of food for each category. It can help you if you ask the people to bring a little bit of the food, for example a handful of grain, or a handful of vegetables, so they can pile up the beans behind each group. However, it is easier for you to take along some of those products in a small plastic bag, each symbolizing the main food groups; a few beans, grains, tubers, dried meat, salt, groundnuts, a paper label of oil. It makes the whole exercise easier and experience shows that people are very interested and see it as a kind of game.
- Do the same exercise for their current food consumption and compare both.

## Composition of diet in an average year



## Composition current diet



The results show that the community put four beans (4 per cent) for wild foods in a diet in a normal year but 49 beans (49 per cent) for wild foods in the current diet. This clearly illustrates that their food consumption patterns has changed, and that they might have severe problems with obtaining enough food for their families.

It is important to verify whether there are differences in consumption patterns between men and women, either by asking directly or by doing this proportional piling in a group with men and a group with women.

## Annex 6

### How to do pair-wise ranking and year ranking

This is a good way to analyse the relative importance of different factors. Pair-wise ranking is used to overcome the difficulty people often have with ranking more than two items at a time. When asked to think about how five or six different items relate to each other, people can sometimes find it difficult to assess so many objects at once. Pair-wise ranking helps you break the process down so that people are only comparing two items at any one time (reference 7).

This is a useful technique when, for example, you want information about the community’s biggest problems; you want to know what their most important food sources are in the household; or what the best or worst harvest year was.

#### Example of pair-wise ranking of the community’s current main problems

During your focus group meetings you ask the people to mention to you the biggest problems they currently face. You tell them that they can tell you in any order, not necessarily in order of difficulty; you just let them list anything they want. Then you draw a table on a piece of paper, as shown below. For example, the group mentions food shortage; no access to health care; poor access to drinking water (distance and quality); insufficient mats and clothes; and crime.

List them as shown in the table below, and ask the group what they consider to be a bigger problem: food shortage or no access to health care. You are now making problem pairs and asking them to rank which is more severe. This is why it is called pair-wise ranking.

If they respond that food shortage is a greater problem, fill in their answer, food shortage, in cell 1. Next, you ask which is a bigger problem, food shortage or drinking water. If they respond food shortage, fill in the answer, food shortage, in cell 2. You go through this process with all the mentioned problems, always letting them choose between one and another. The eventual result may be look like the following table:

Problems	Food shortage	No access to health care	Drinking water	Lack of mats, clothes	Crime
Food shortage		Food shortage (cell 1)	Food shortage (cell 2)	Food shortage	Food shortage
No access to health care			Drinking water	No access to health care	No access to health care
Drinking water				Drinking water	Drinking water
Lack of mats, clothes					Crime
Crime					

Now you can start ranking the problems and mark the ones that are their biggest priorities at the moment by listing them all and scoring how often they are selected as the bigger problem in the pair:

- Food shortage, chosen four times
- No access to health care, chosen two times
- Drinking water, chosen three times
- Lack of mats, clothes, chosen zero times
- Crime, chosen one time

From this list you can conclude that in this community, at the current time, food shortage is the main concern, then drinking water, followed by lack of access to health care, and then crime.

The fact that lack of mats, clothes has a score of zero does not mean that it is not a problem; it means that it is less severe than the other four problems.

Note: It is important to find out whether both women and men perceive the ranking of the community problems in the same way; therefore the same exercise can be done in focus groups with only men and only women.

#### **Example for year ranking**

When your food security assessment follows, for example, a drought, it can be useful to know how the harvest was in previous years. It enables you to see whether communities were already struggling for consecutive years or whether this is the first year of crisis. You can ask the people to score the last 4-5 years in terms of good, average or bad harvest year. If this is difficult, use pair-wise ranking and ask them if the current year is worse or better than last year, if the current year is worse or better than two years ago, and so forth.

#### ***Example of a small agro-pastoralist community in South Darfur, Sudan:***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Harvest result</b>
2000	Good
2001	Good
2002	Good
2003	Average
2004	Bad

This illustrates that their food stores were not sufficient in 2004 and that if a new crisis occurred in 2005, that this community might have difficulties coping.



## Annex 7

### How to compile a timeline

The aim of a timeline is to understand the recent history of the area and its people by identifying the main events that have affected the lives of the people. It can give an indication of the relative severity of the current period of food insecurity, and different causes from previous periods of food insecurity.

The timeline can be used with groups or with individuals if we are interested in particular perspectives.

To compile a timeline, follow these steps:

- Draw a line and mark two or three important events that have occurred in the community's recent history. Place them in chronological order on the line.
- Explain that the objective is to fill in the gaps on this line with other events.
- Ask people to think about significant events, both positive and negative, and to mark them on the line. Ask them to explain the causes of the events and their impact.

#### Example from Somalia

Source: Prepared April 2000 by the Food Security Assessment Unit and Save the Children for Somalia.

<http://www.fsasomali.org/uploads/Other/260.pdf>

#### Timeline

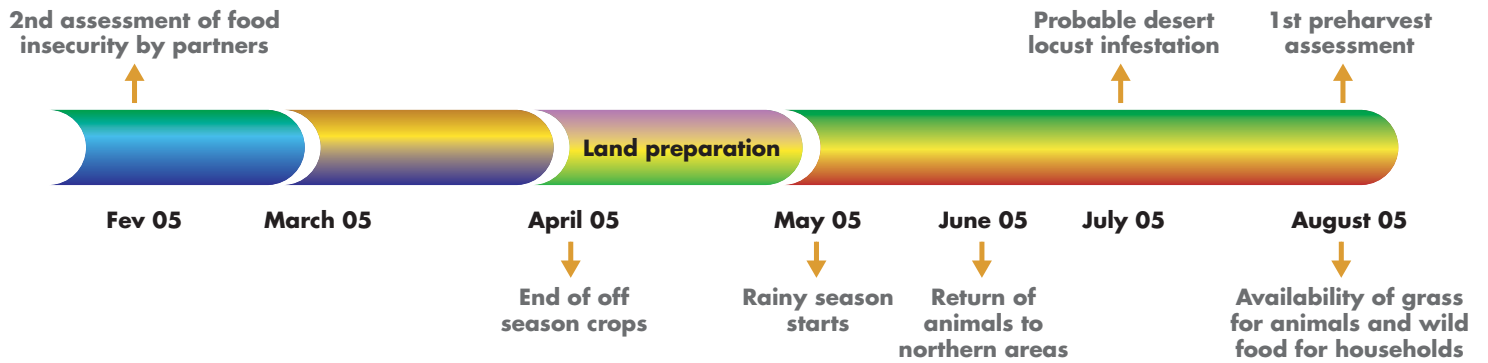
Event	Production
<b>1990</b>	<b>Very Poor year</b> No rains, no stocks.
<b>1991</b> Conflict, looting, displacement, disease.	<b>Conflict year</b>
<b>1992</b> Fighting, drought and disease outbreak.	<b>Conflict year</b> No farming. No harvest.
<b>1993</b> Improved security. Markets open via Mogadiscio.	<b>Good year</b> Good rains; good harvest.
<b>1994</b> Water pumps distributed. Start of recovery for riverine people.	<b>Poor-normal year</b> Good maize harvest. Good onion and tomato prices.
<b>1995</b> Excellent onion and tomato prices.	<b>Good year</b> Good cash crop harvest. Poor rainfed harvest.
<b>1996</b> Good market prices and good road accessibility.	<b>Good year</b> Good production in irrigated fields. Normal harvest in rain-fed areas.
<b>1997</b> Deyr - El Nino floods. Sand and silt dunes over irrigated fields.	<b>Mixed year</b> Good Gu production. Deyr flood damage.
<b>1998</b> Abandoning part of the irrigated fields. Hiring of farms further from the river.	<b>Poor-normal year</b> Poor Gu, following El Nino. Better Deyr. Good cash crop production.
<b>1999</b> Onion seeds expensive. January ban on rehabilitation activities imposed on Gedo region.	<b>Normal year</b> Maize produced in both seasons, as cereal prices high.
<b>2000</b> River level low in early Gu. Gebo ban lifted in July.	<b>Normal Gu season</b> Lower cereal prices due to good rainfed production.

You can also make a timeline of a much shorter period showing critical events, as shown in the next **example from Niger**.

Source: FEWSNET. [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/westafrica/6\\_cap/6.1\\_cap2005myr/MYR\\_2005\\_WestAfrica.doc](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/westafrica/6_cap/6.1_cap2005myr/MYR_2005_WestAfrica.doc)

### Critical events timeline for Niger

- Increasing prices of cereals and dwindling terms of exchange in food insecure zones
- Reduction of sources of food and income



## Annex 8

### How to compile an activity profile

Activity profiles or daily calendars are descriptions of people’s activities throughout the day, and are useful in learning about differences between men and women; how different members of the community spend their time; if children are important for essential activities; what time is spent acquiring food; and ways in which this is changing.

They can also help us to design programmes. For example, if people are spending 5 hours per day collecting water, there may be scope for developing an improved water supply.

Through comparing current daily schedules with previous ones you can identify trends. For example if people are now walking 2 hours to find firewood whereas previously they could find it within half an hour, we can conclude that there may be a deforestation problem and a project to promote fuel-efficient stoves might be useful.

Activity profiles can be constructed with focus groups or with individuals. It is often interesting to carry out separate exercises with different members of a household, for example with men, women and children. Ask participants to describe a typical day, giving as much detail as possible about the activities they carry out and the amount of time each activity takes. You can also ask participants about an average 2-3 day period, since certain activities may not take place daily but may take place a few times each week, but still be significant activities.

#### Example of women’s activities

Currently (the period between planting and harvesting)	On average (the period between planting and harvesting in a normal period)
<p><b>Morning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preparing meals</li> <li>■ Eating</li> <li>■ Feeding children</li> <li>■ Cleaning compound</li> <li>■ Half of women go for collecting firewood; few stay at home to mind the small children</li> </ul>	<p><b>Morning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preparing meals</li> <li>■ Eating</li> <li>■ Feeding children</li> <li>■ Cleaning compound</li> <li>■ Home gardening, some go for weeding</li> <li>■ Few women go for collecting firewood</li> </ul>
<p><b>Afternoon</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Some women are still collecting firewood</li> <li>■ Some women will feed the small children</li> <li>■ Third of group collects wild foods (5 hours)</li> <li>■ Fetching water done by children</li> </ul>	<p><b>Afternoon</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preparing meals</li> <li>■ Eating</li> <li>■ Feeding children</li> <li>■ Fetching water (2 hours)</li> <li>■ Washing, laundry near river (1 hour)</li> <li>■ Making flour</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preparing meals</li> <li>■ Eating</li> <li>■ Feeding children</li> <li>■ Processing wild foods for consumption</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preparing meals</li> <li>■ Eating</li> <li>■ Feeding children</li> <li>■ Some mat making</li> </ul>

The following day one-third of the women go to the market or road to sell firewood for the whole day.

This example illustrates that many women are currently much more engaged in collecting wild foods and this takes a large part of their time together with collecting firewood. It indicates that this group has difficulties obtaining enough food. It also shows a reduction in the number of daily meals from three to two.

## Annex 9

### How to compile a price overview table

Price comparisons can give you an indication of whether the current prices are more or less normal, or have increased or decreased greatly due to a crisis (for example, drought, damage to food stores, crop failure due to insect infestation, animal disease outbreaks, and transport barriers). When you find that prices are abnormally high or low for a product you need to look further in your assessment for the causes. A price analysis is only a useful tool to diagnose severe problems. It is worth trying to find annual prices from secondary sources combined with primary sources (via focus groups or market visits and interviews with key-informants).

#### Example 1: Key-informant interview with a grain trader and grain shopkeeper in Sudan on price trends of sorghum

Date	Unit	Price in the local Sudanese currency
July 2004	90 kg sack	1,800-2,000
August 2004	90 kg sack	2,000
September 2004	90 kg sack	2,500
September 2003	90 kg sack	1,500-1,700

This table illustrates an unusually high price for sorghum in September 2004. A deeper analysis through the food security assessment showed that this was caused by a combination of drought; conflict causing less planting and therefore lower yields; and transport barriers.

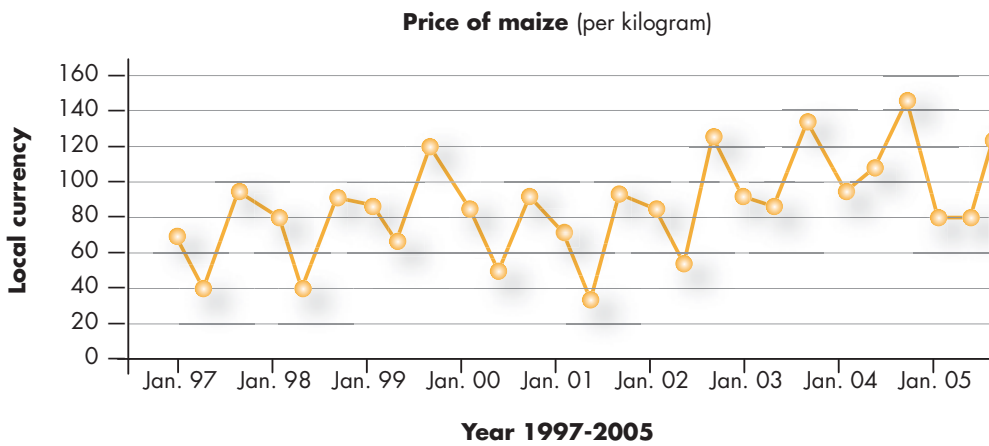
#### Example 2: Results on general commodity prices following separate focus group discussions with men and women (prices in local currency)

Commodity	Unit	Current price	Price one year ago
Millet	90 kg sack	6,000	5,000
Sorghum	90 kg sack	4,000	3,000
Okra dried	1.5 kg	300	500
Onion	2 kg	500	700
Oil	1 litre	300	250
Sugar	1 pound	150	75
Groundnut	90 kg sack	4,000	3,500
Goat	1	4,000	5,000
Cow	1 average size	30,000	35,000
Soap	3 bars	100	75

This example shows there is not a clear pattern of large price changes. Some commodities have increased in price compared to last year, but it is possible that this expected or normal. Some prices have decreased.

Since the livestock prices are decreasing, it is important to find out in your food security assessment whether livestock keepers are de-stocking or selling their animals. For what reason might they be doing this? You need to verify if that is a normal situation or whether people are selling livestock in order to obtain cash because grain prices are expected to increase by a large amount.

**Example 3: From secondary data it is sometimes possible to draw a graph showing price trends over several years.** In this way you can compare prices from your assessment to this baseline information. The following graph shows an upward trend in prices in 2004 and 2005.







# The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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## **Humanity**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

## **Impartiality**

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## **Neutrality**

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## **Independence**

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## **Voluntary Service**

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## **Unity**

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## **Universality**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



The *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.