

DRAWING LESSONS FROM FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION FOR IMPROVED DECISION MAKING AND RESPONSE

Dear FSN Forum members,

Welcome to this forum! As FIVIMS Coordinator, my task is to work with practitioners in the food security and nutrition domain to come to a better understanding of why so many people around the world remain food insecure and vulnerable - and what the underlying causes are. The FAO-led FIVIMS programme also advocates to identify who these people are, where and how many - and based on an in-depth analysis - argue for targeted policies and programmes that will address the plight of the millions of people who still suffer from hunger on a daily basis.

Based on the above principles, FAO provides guidance and support under various projects and programmes in strengthening in-country and regional capacities to conduct food security and vulnerability analysis and to produce information for improved decision-making in policy formulation and programming to achieve food security and nutrition (FSN) objectives.

As FSN Forum members, you represent a broad community of researchers, analysts and practitioners, and many of you have hands-on experience at country level in analyzing and communicating information on food insecure and vulnerable population groups, or in advising key decision-makers concerned with policies and programmes for poverty and hunger reduction.

As highlighted by Kostas Stamoulis, one key objective of this Forum is to generate and share knowledge on FSN issues. Our expectation is that knowledge shared among all will equip us better to inform policy formulation and targeted action for improved food security and nutrition.

SETTING THE STAGE: My job today is to take a step back and to seek your input on how your own research, analysis and information on FSN issues can contribute to knowledge generation. As you provide feedback during the discussion, please consider the following:

(i) **PURPOSE:** no matter whether you are conducting research, analyzing a particular food security and nutrition situation, or advising key decision-makers, in order to have an impact, one must be clear about the ultimate purpose - or objective - for which the research, analysis or information is generated. One such purpose could be 'disaster preparedness', or 'effective early warning', a 'food security baseline assessment', 'policy formulation', or 'monitoring and evaluation'. Another purpose could be working towards the progressive realization of the "Right to Food", the theme of today's World Food Day.

(ii) **INDICATORS:** Many of you have expressed an interest to discuss food security and nutrition indicators. The right choice of indicators is indeed critical for research and analysis, information and advocacy. A proposed list of key indicators for food security, nutrition and vulnerability analysis prepared by the Inter-Agency Working Group on FIVIMS is a useful reference that we have included among the resources on the FSN website.

(iii) **COMMUNICATION:** No matter how solid any research, analysis or information on food security and nutrition issues is, it will not translate into knowledge and informed policy formulation and action, if the results of the work carried out it is not well communicated.

(iv) INFORMATION NEEDS and (v) ACTION: In many cases, unless your research work or the analysis you conduct is in response to an expressed need for information or for a specific research gap, your efforts may not result in desired policy change or specific action.

OUR DISCUSSION TOPIC:

Seeing the importance of the above factors, we are looking for success stories in knowledge generation in the FSN domain that has resulted in concrete action along the 5 points outlined above. Please do also point out failures or knowledge gaps in research, analysis and information, as others on this Global Forum might provide you with answers or guidance.

* Concretely, please provide the FSN Forum with a short account of how you have been successful in conducting research or analysis, or have generated information in...

(i) specifying a particular **PURPOSE**;

(ii) clarifying which **INDICATORS** you used;

(iii) stating how you **COMMUNICATED** your findings;

(iv) explaining whether your work was in response to an **EXPRESSED NEED** for information (by whom and for what purpose); and

(v) stating whether (or not) the knowledge generated resulted in **CONCRETE ACTION**.

For all points above, please also explain what your **SUCCESS FACTORS** have been and whether you find that you are still facing a **KNOWLEDGE GAP** (or a constraint) related to this topic.

At the end of this discussion, we will compile a selection of success stories in a lessons learned paper, which will be used as a reference document for future FSN research and analysis. This paper will be shared with you and non-members for future use.

DISCUSSION SCHEDULE:

For a well-structured discussion, we will focus on different sub-sets of the 5 points listed above in a 3-week schedule (one question per week). Please read Huyen's message entitled "Discussion schedule and guidelines". For this first week, we invite you to concentrate on the first two points only

(Question1):

QUESTION 1: In conducting research or analysis, or in generating information on FSN, please (i) specify a particular **PURPOSE** and (ii) list **KEY INDICATORS** you used.

Please also provide a short account of your success factors or the failures or knowledge gaps in research, analysis and information, which according to your experience, must be addressed.

I'm looking forward to a lively discussion!

Mark Smulders,

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