

FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 40  
**REVISING THE FOOD SECURITY COMPONENT OF THE  
SPHERE HANDBOOK**  
FROM 14 JULY TO 14 AUGUST 2009

**NOTE**

The below topic is raised by Devrig Velly, ACF (Action Against Hunger - US) Senior Food Security and Livelihoods advisor based in New York Headquarters and Food security Focal Point for the revision of the Sphere Handbook – Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (<http://www.sphereproject.org/>).

The Sphere Handbook has been one of the most widely recognised tools for improving humanitarian response, not only by NGOs but also, and increasingly, by United Nations agencies, host governments, donor governments and other actors involved in humanitarian response. For the Sphere Handbook to remain relevant, Sphere needs to keep in touch with changing practices in the context of humanitarian work, as well as technical innovations. To this end, and acknowledging the significant changes that have taken place since the 2004 edition, the Sphere Board has decided to revise the Sphere Project Handbook.

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Dear FSN forum colleagues,

The revision process is to be coordinated by a group of Focal Points and the Sphere project team over the next year, with publication scheduled in 2010 (last quarter). Milestone meetings are due to be held, 28-30 September 2009 and 13-15 January 2010. As the Focal Point for food security, I will be working closely with the focal points for nutrition and food aid (as well as environment/DRR, and gender) to ensure the respective standards are well integrated. I will also be working closely with a Food Security Core Working Group (composed of about 20 experts) to ensure that new approach, new ideas, right tools ...etc and valid suggestions highlighted by members and practitioners are debated.

As a bit of background, the Food security component in the Sphere handbook is currently structured via 5 minimum standards, 37 key indicators, 39 guidance notes and 4 appendices. In the English version these are developed from pages 114 to 133 (pages 172 to 179 and 194 to 199 for the appendices).

I would like to invite the FSN forum members to give feedback on the following questions:

- 1. What are the new standards that need to be added, if any? Please be specific and, if possible, provide evidence-based background or references to your suggestion.**
- 2. What are the indicators/guidance notes that you think need to be adjusted? Please be specific and, if possible, provide evidence-based background or references to your suggestion.**
- 3. What are the missing information/findings that need to be considered and reflected in the indicators/guidance notes or annexes?**

According to the initial feedback and importance of suggestions for changes we might launch other consultation rounds later on focusing on each standard. Nevertheless if you feel more comfortable to go right now in one or several standards please find here below the details:

- [1. Assessment and analysis standard 1: Food security](#) (standard 2 is about nutrition)
- [2. Food security standard 1: general food security](#)
- [3. Food security standard 2: primary production](#)
- [4. Food security standard 3: income and employment](#)
- [5. Food security standard 4: access to markets](#)

I thank you in advance for your contributions to this upcoming handbook revision and looking forward to hearing from you!

Best regards  
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**The following text can be found in the “Food Security, Nutrition and Food Aid” Chapter, from pages 114 to 133 (pages 172 to 179 and 194 to 199 for the appendices).**

[http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com\\_docman/task,cat\\_view/gid,17/Itemid,203/lang,english/](http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,17/Itemid,203/lang,english/)

### **Assessment and analysis standard 1: food security**

Where people are at risk of food insecurity, programme decisions are based on a demonstrated understanding of how they normally access food, the impact of the disaster on current and future food security, and hence the most appropriate response.

#### **Key indicators** (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- \_ Assessments and analyses examine food security in relevant geographic locations and livelihood groupings, distinguishing between seasons, and over time, to identify and prioritise needs (see guidance note 1).
- \_ The assessment demonstrates understanding of the broader social, economic and political policies, institutions and processes that affect food security (see guidance note 2).
- \_ The assessment includes an investigation and analysis of coping strategies (see guidance note 3).
- \_ Where possible, the assessment builds upon local capacities, including both formal and informal institutions (see guidance note 4).
- \_ The methodology used is comprehensively described in the assessment report and is seen to adhere to widely accepted principles (see guidance note 5).
- \_ Use is made of existing secondary data, and the collection of new primary data in the field is focused on additional information essential for decision-making (see guidance note 6).
- \_ Recommended food security responses are designed to support, protect and promote livelihood strategies, while also meeting immediate needs (see guidance note 7).
- \_ The impact of food insecurity on the population's nutritional status is considered (see guidance note 8).

#### **Guidance notes**

**1. Scope of analysis:** food security varies according to people's livelihoods, their location, their social status, the time of year and the nature of the disaster and associated responses. The focus of the assessment will reflect how the affected population acquired food and income before the disaster, and how the disaster has affected this. For example, in urban and peri-urban areas, the focus may be on reviewing the market supply of food, while in rural areas it will usually be on food production. Where people have been displaced, the food security of the host population must also be taken into account. Food security assessments may be undertaken when planning to phase out a programme as well as prior to starting one. In either case, they should be coordinated among all concerned parties to minimise duplication of effort. Assessments gathering new information should complement secondary data from existing information sources.

**2. Context:** food insecurity may be the result of wider macro-economic and structural socio-political factors e.g. national and international policies, processes or institutions that affect people's access to

nutritionally adequate food. This is usually defined as chronic food insecurity, in that it is a long-term condition resulting from structural vulnerabilities, but it may be aggravated by the impact of a disaster.

**3. Coping strategies:** assessment and analysis should consider the different types of coping strategy, who is applying them and how well they work. While strategies vary, there are nonetheless distinct stages of coping. Early coping strategies are not necessarily abnormal, are reversible and cause no lasting damage e.g. collection of wild foods, selling non-essential assets or sending a family member to work elsewhere. Later strategies, sometimes called crisis strategies, may permanently undermine future food security e.g. sale of land, distress migration of whole families or deforestation. Some coping strategies employed by women and girls tend to expose them to higher risk of HIV infection e.g. prostitution and illicit relationships, or sexual violence as they travel to unsafe areas. Increased migration generally may increase risk of HIV transmission. Coping strategies may also affect the environment e.g. over-exploitation of commonly owned natural resources. It is important that food security is protected and supported before all non-damaging options are exhausted.

**4. Local capacities:** participation of the community and appropriate local institutions at all stages of assessment and planning is vital. Programmes should be based on need and tailored to the particular local context. In areas subject to recurrent natural disasters or long-running conflicts there may be local early warning and emergency response systems or networks. Communities which have previously experienced drought or floods may have their own contingency plans. It is important that such local capacities are supported.

**5. Methodology:** it is important to consider carefully the coverage of assessments and sampling procedures, even if informal. The process documented in the report should be both logical and transparent, and should reflect recognised procedures for food security assessment. Methodological approaches need to be coordinated among agencies and with the government to ensure that information and analyses are complementary and consistent, so that information can be compared over time. Multi-agency assessments are usually preferable. The triangulation of different sources and types of food security information is vital in order to arrive at a consistent conclusion across different sources e.g. crop assessments, satellite images, household assessments etc. A checklist of the main areas to be considered in an assessment is given in Appendix 1. A checklist for reviewing methodology is provided in Appendix 2.

**6. Sources of information:** in many situations a wealth of secondary information exists about the situation pre-disaster, including the normal availability of food, the access that different groups normally have to food, the groups that are most food-insecure, and the effects of previous crises on food availability and the access of different groups. Effective use of secondary information enables the gathering of primary data during the assessment to be focused on what is essential in the new situation.

**7. Long-term planning:** while meeting immediate needs and preserving productive assets will always be the priority during the initial stages of a crisis, responses must always be planned with the longer term in mind.

This requires technical expertise in a range of sectors, as well as abilities to work closely with members of the community, including representatives from all groups. Participation of community members at all stages of assessment and programme planning is vital, not least for their perspectives of long-term possibilities and risks. Recommendations must be based on a sound and demonstrated understanding by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel. The assessment team should include relevant sectoral experts, including e.g. agriculturalists, agro-economists, veterinarians, social scientists, and water and sanitation or other appropriate experts (see Participation standard on page 28).

**8. Food insecurity and nutritional status:** food insecurity is one of three underlying causes of malnutrition, and therefore wherever there is food insecurity there is risk of malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies.

Consideration of the impact of food insecurity on the nutrition situation is an essential part of food security assessment. However, it should not be assumed that food insecurity is the sole cause of malnutrition, without considering possible health and care causal factors.

## *2 Minimum Standards in Food Security*

**Food security includes access to food (including affordability), adequacy of food supply or availability, and the stability of supply and access over time. It also covers the quality, variety and safety of food, and the consumption and biological utilisation of food.**

**The resilience of people's livelihoods, and their vulnerability to food insecurity, is largely determined by the resources available to them, and how these have been affected by disaster. These resources include economic and financial property (such as cash, credit, savings and investments) and also include physical, natural, human and social capital. For people affected by disaster, the preservation, recovery and development of the resources necessary for their food security and future livelihoods is usually a priority.**

**In conflict situations, insecurity and the threat of conflict may seriously restrict livelihood activities and access to markets.**

**Households may suffer direct loss of assets, either abandoned as a result of flight or destroyed or commandeered by warring parties.**

**The first food security standard, following on from the food security assessment and analysis standard on page 111, is a general standard that applies to all aspects of food security programming in disasters, including issues relating to survival and preservation of assets. The remaining three standards relate to primary production, income generation and employment, and access to markets, including goods and services. Appendix 3 describes a range of food security responses.**

**There is some obvious overlap between the food security standards, as food security responses usually have multiple objectives, relating to different aspects of food security and hence are covered by more than one standard (including also standards in the water, health and shelter sectors). In addition, a balance of programmes is required to achieve all standards in food security. Disaster response should support and/or complement existing government services in terms of structure, design and long-term sustainability.**

### **Food security standard 1: general food security**

People have access to adequate and appropriate food and non-food items in a manner that ensures their survival, prevents erosion of assets and upholds their dignity.

#### **Key indicators** (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- \_ Where people's lives are at risk through lack of food, responses prioritise meeting their immediate food needs (see guidance note 1).
- \_ In all disaster contexts, measures are taken to support, protect and promote food security. This includes preserving productive assets or recovering those lost as the result of disaster (see guidance note 2).
- \_ Responses that protect and support food security are based on sound analysis, in consultation with the disaster-affected community.
- \_ Responses take account of people's coping strategies, their benefits and any associated risks and costs (see guidance note 3).
- \_ Transition and exit strategies are developed for all food security responses to disaster, and are publicised and applied as appropriate (see guidance note 4).
- \_ When a response supports the development of new or alternative livelihood strategies, all groups have access to appropriate support, including necessary knowledge, skills and services (see guidance note 5).
- \_ Food security responses have the least possible degradative effect on the environment (see guidance note 6).

\_ Numbers of beneficiaries are monitored to determine the level of acceptance and access by different groups in the population and to ensure overall coverage of the affected population without discrimination (see guidance note 7).

\_ The effects of responses on the local economy, social networks, livelihoods and the environment are monitored, in addition to ongoing monitoring linked to programme objectives (see guidance note 8).

## Guidance notes

**1. *Prioritising life-saving responses:*** although food distribution is the most common response to acute food insecurity in disasters, other types of response may also help people meet their immediate food needs.

Examples include sales of subsidised food (when people have some purchasing power but supplies are lacking); improving purchasing power through employment programmes (including food-for-work); and destocking initiatives or cash distributions. Especially in urban areas, the priority may be to re-establish normal market arrangements and revitalise economic activities that provide employment. Such strategies may be more appropriate than food distribution because they uphold dignity, support livelihoods and thereby reduce future vulnerability. Agencies have a responsibility to take into account what others are doing to ensure that the combined response provides complementary inputs and services.

General food distributions should be introduced only when absolutely necessary and should be discontinued as soon as possible. General free food distribution may not be appropriate when:

- adequate supplies of food are available in the area (and the need is to address obstacles to access);
- a localised lack of food availability can be addressed by support of market systems;
- local attitudes or policies are against free food handouts.

**2. *Support, protection and promotion of food security:*** appropriate measures to support food security can include a wide range of responses and advocacy (see Appendix 3). Although in the short term it may not be feasible to achieve food security based entirely on people's own livelihood strategies, existing strategies that contribute to household food security and preserve dignity should be protected and supported wherever possible. Food security responses do not necessarily seek a complete

recovery of assets lost as a result of disaster, but seek to prevent further erosion and to promote a process of recovery.

**3. *Risks associated with coping strategies:*** many coping strategies carry costs or incur risks that may increase vulnerability. For example:

- cutbacks in amounts of food eaten or in the quality of diets lead to declining health and nutritional status;
- cutbacks 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 diseases;
- 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 reduces the availability of natural capital (e.g. excessive fishing, collection of firewood etc);
- travel to insecure areas to work or to gather food or fuel exposes people (especially women and children) to attack;
- producing or trading illicit goods risks arrest and imprisonment;
- separation of families and mothers from children risks poor standards of child care and malnutrition.

These progressive and debilitating effects must be recognised and early interventions undertaken to discourage such strategies and prevent asset loss. Certain coping strategies may also undermine dignity, where people are forced to engage in socially demeaning or unacceptable activities. However, in many societies certain strategies (such as sending a family member to work elsewhere during hard times) are a well-established tradition.

**4. Exit and transition strategies:** such strategies must be considered from the outset of a programme, particularly where the response may have long-term implications e.g. the provision of free services which would normally be paid for, such as access to credit or veterinary services. Before closing the programme or transiting to a new phase, there should be evidence that the situation has improved.

**5. Access to knowledge, skills and services:** structures that provide relevant services should be designed and planned together with the users, so that they are appropriate and adequately maintained, where possible beyond the life of the project. Some groups have very specific needs e.g. children orphaned as a result of AIDS may miss out on the information and skills transfer that takes place within families.

**6. Environmental impact:** as far as possible, the natural resource base for production and livelihoods of the affected population – and of host populations – should be preserved. Impact on the surrounding environment should be considered during assessment and the planning of any response. For example, people living in camps require cooking fuel, which may lead rapidly to local deforestation. The distribution of foodstuffs which have long cooking times, such as certain beans, will require more cooking fuel, thus also potentially affecting the environment (see Food aid planning standard 2 on page 158). Where possible, responses should aim to preserve the environment from further degradation. For example, destocking programmes reduce the pressure of animal grazing on pasture during a drought, making more feed available for surviving livestock.

**7. Coverage, access and acceptability:** beneficiaries and their characteristics should be described and their numbers estimated before determining the level of participation of different groups (paying particular attention to vulnerable groups). Participation is partly determined by ease of access and the acceptability of activities to participants. Even though some food security responses are targeted at the economically active, they should nevertheless be non-discriminatory and seek to provide access for vulnerable groups, as well as protecting dependents, including children. Various constraints, including capacity to work, workload at home, responsibilities for caring for children, the chronically ill or disabled, and restricted physical access, may limit the participation of women, people with disabilities and older people. Overcoming these constraints involves identifying activities that are within the capacity of these groups or setting up appropriate support structures. Targeting mechanisms based on self-selection should normally be established with full consultation with all groups in the community (see Targeting standard on page 35).

**8. Monitoring:** as well as routine monitoring (see Monitoring and Evaluation standards on pages 37-40), it is also necessary to monitor the wider food security situation in order to assess the continued relevance of the programme, determine when to phase out specific activities or to introduce modifications or new projects as needed, and to identify any need for advocacy. Local and regional food security information systems, including famine early warning systems, are important sources of information.

## **Food security standard 2: primary production**

Primary production mechanisms are protected and supported.

### **Key indicators** (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

\_ Interventions to support primary production are based on a demonstrated understanding of the viability of production systems, including access to and availability of necessary inputs and services (see guidance note 1).

\_ New technologies are introduced only where their implications for local production systems, cultural practices and environment are understood and accepted by food producers (see guidance note 2).

\_ Where possible, a range of inputs is provided in order to give producers more flexibility in managing production, processing and distribution and in reducing risks (see guidance note 3).

\_ Productive plant, animal or fisheries inputs are delivered in time, are locally acceptable and conform to appropriate quality norms (see guidance notes 4-5).

- \_ The introduction of inputs and services does not exacerbate vulnerability or increase risk, e.g. by increasing competition for scarce natural resources or by damaging existing social networks (see guidance note 6).
- \_ Inputs and services are purchased locally whenever possible, unless this would adversely affect local producers, markets or consumers (see guidance note 7).
- \_ Food producers, processors and distributors receiving project inputs make appropriate use of them (see guidance notes 8-9).
- \_ Responses understand the need for complementary inputs and services and provide these where appropriate.

## Guidance notes

1. **Viability of primary production:** to be viable, food production strategies must have a reasonable chance of developing adequately and succeeding. This may be influenced by a wide range of factors including:

- access to sufficient natural resources (farmland, pasture, water, rivers, lakes, coastal waters, etc.). The ecological balance should not be endangered, e.g. by over-exploitation of marginal lands, over-fishing, or pollution of water, especially in peri-urban areas;
- levels of skills and capacities, which may be limited where communities are seriously affected by disease, or where education and training may be barred to some groups;
- labour availability in relation to existing patterns of production and the timing of key agricultural activities;
- availability of inputs and the nature and coverage of related services (financial, veterinary, agricultural extension), which may be provided by government institutions and/or other bodies;
- the legality of specific activities or the affected groups' right to work e.g. controls on the collection of firewood or restrictions on rights of refugees to undertake paid work;
- security because of armed conflict, destruction of transport infrastructure, landmines, threat of attack or banditry. Production should not adversely affect the access of other groups to lifesustaining natural resources such as water.

2. **Technological development:** 'new' technologies may include improved crop varieties or livestock species, new tools or fertilisers. As far as possible, food production activities should follow existing patterns and/or be linked with national development plans. New technologies should only be introduced during a disaster if they have previously been tested in the local area and are known to be appropriate. When introduced, new technologies should be accompanied by appropriate community consultations, provision of information, training and other relevant support. The capacity of extension services within local government departments, NGOs and others to facilitate this should be assessed and if necessary reinforced.

3. **Improving choice:** examples of interventions that offer producers greater choice include cash inputs or credit in lieu of, or to complement, productive inputs, and seed fairs that provide farmers with the opportunity to select seed of their choice. Production should not have negative nutritional implications, such as the replacement of food crops by cash crops. The provision of animal fodder during drought can provide a more direct human nutrition benefit to pastoralists than the provision of food assistance.

4. **Timeliness and acceptability:** examples of productive inputs include seeds, tools, fertiliser, livestock, fishing equipment, hunting implements, loans and credit facilities, market information, transport facilities, etc. The provision of agricultural inputs and veterinary services must be timed to coincide with the relevant agricultural and animal husbandry seasons; e.g. the provision of seeds and tools must precede the planting season. Emergency destocking of livestock during a drought should take place before excess livestock mortality occurs, while restocking should start when recovery is well assured, e.g. following the next rains.

5. **Seeds:** priority should be given to local seed, so that farmers can use their own criteria to establish quality. Local varieties should be approved by farmers and local agricultural staff. Seeds should be adaptable to local conditions and be resistant to disease. Seeds originating from outside the region need to be adequately certified and checked for appropriateness to local conditions.

Hybrid seeds may be appropriate where farmers are familiar with them and have experience growing them. This can only be determined through consultation with the community. When seeds are provided free of charge, farmers may prefer hybrid seeds to local varieties because these are otherwise costly to purchase. Government policies regarding hybrid seeds should also be complied with before distribution.

Genetically modified (GMO) seeds should not be distributed unless they have been approved by the national or other ruling authorities.

**6. Impact on rural livelihoods:** primary food production may not be viable if there is a shortage of vital natural resources. Promoting production that requires increased or changed access to locally available natural resources may heighten tensions within the local population, as well as further restricting access to water and other essential needs. Care should be taken with the provision of financial resources, in the form of either grants or loans, since these may also increase the risk of local insecurity (see Food security standard 3, guidance note 5 on page 130). In addition, the free provision of inputs may disturb traditional mechanisms for social support and redistribution.

**7. Local purchase of inputs:** inputs and services for food production, such as livestock health services, seed, etc., should be obtained through existing in-country supply systems where possible. However, before embarking on local purchases the risk should be considered of project purchases distorting the market e.g. raising prices of scarce items.

**8. Monitoring usage:** indicators of the process and the outputs from food production, processing and distribution may be estimated e.g. area planted, quantity of seed planted per hectare, yield, number of offspring, etc. It is important to determine how producers use the project inputs i.e. verifying that seeds are indeed planted, and that tools, fertilisers, nets and fishing gear are used as intended. The quality of the inputs should also be reviewed in terms of their acceptability and producer preferences. Important for evaluation is consideration of how the project has affected food available to the household e.g. household food stocks, the quantity and quality of food consumed, or the amount of food traded or given away. Where the project aims to increase production of a specific food type, such as animal or fish products or protein-rich legumes, the households' use of these products should be investigated. The results of this type of analysis may be cross-validated with nutritional surveys (provided health and care determinants of nutritional status are also considered).

**9. Unforeseen or negative effects of inputs:** for example, the effect of changes in labour patterns in subsequent agricultural seasons, the effect of responses on alternative and existing coping strategies (e.g. diversion of labour), labour patterns of women and effect on child care, school attendance and effect on education, risks taken in order to access land and other essential resources.

### **Food security standard 3: income and employment**

Where income generation and employment are feasible livelihood strategies, people have access to appropriate income-earning opportunities, which generate fair remuneration and contribute towards food security without jeopardising the resources on which livelihoods are based.

#### **Key indicators** (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

\_ Project decisions about timing, work activities, type of remuneration and the technical feasibility of implementation are based on a demonstrated understanding of local human resource capacities, a market and economic analysis, and an analysis of demand and supply for relevant skills and training needs (see guidance notes 1-2).

\_ Responses providing job or income opportunities are technically feasible and all necessary inputs are available on time. Where possible, responses contribute to the food security of others and preserve or restore the environment.

\_ The level of remuneration is appropriate, and payments for waged labour are prompt, regular and timely. In situations of acute food insecurity, payments may be made in advance (see guidance note 3).

\_ Procedures are in place to provide a safe, secure working environment (see guidance note 4).



\_ Projects involving large sums of cash include measures to avoid diversion and/or insecurity (see guidance note 5).

\_ Responses providing labour opportunities protect and support household caring responsibilities, and do not negatively affect the local environment or interfere with regular livelihood activities (see guidance note 6).

\_ The household management and use of remuneration (cash or food), grants or loans are understood and seen to be contributing towards the food security of all household members (see guidance note 7).

## Guidance notes

**1. Appropriateness of initiatives:** project activities should make maximum use of local human resources in project design and the identification of appropriate activities. As far as possible, food-for-work (FFW) and cash-for-work (CFW) activities should be selected by, and planned with, the participating groups themselves. Where there are large numbers of displaced people (refugees or IDPs), employment opportunities should not be at the expense of the local host population. In some circumstances, employment opportunities should be made available to both groups. Understanding household management and use of cash is important in deciding whether and in what form microfinance services could support food security (see also Food security standard 2).

**2. Type of remuneration:** remuneration may be in cash or in food, or a combination of both, and should enable food-insecure households to meet their needs. Rather than payment, remuneration may often take the form of an incentive provided to help people to undertake tasks that are of direct benefit to themselves. FFW may be preferred to CFW where markets are weak or unregulated, or where little food is available. FFW may also be appropriate where women are more likely to control the use of food than of cash. CFW is preferred where trade and markets can assure the local availability of food, and secure systems for dispersal of cash are available. People's purchasing needs, and the impact of giving either cash or food on other basic needs (school attendance, access to health services, social obligations) should be considered. The type and level of remuneration should be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the above and the availability of cash and food resources.

**3. Payments:** levels of remuneration should take account of the needs of the food-insecure households and of local labour rates. There are no universally accepted guidelines for setting levels of remuneration, but where remuneration is in kind and provided as an income transfer, the resale value of the food on local markets must be considered. The net gain to individuals in income through participation in the programme activities should be greater than if they had spent their time on other activities. This applies to FFW, CFW and also credit, business start-ups, etc. Income-earning opportunities should enhance the range of income sources, and not take the place of existing sources. Remuneration should not have a negative impact on local labour markets e.g. by causing wage rate inflation, diverting labour from other activities or undermining essential public services.

**4. Risk in the work environment:** a high-risk working environment should be avoided, by introducing practical procedures for minimising risk or treating injuries e.g. briefings, first aid kits, protective clothing where necessary. This should include risk of HIV exposure, and measures should be taken to minimise this.

**5. Risk of insecurity and diversion:** handing out cash, e.g. in the distribution of loans or payment of remuneration for work done, introduces security concerns for both programme staff and the recipients. A balance has to be achieved between security risks to both groups, and a range of options should be reviewed. For ease of access and safety of recipients, the point of distribution should be as close as possible to their homes, i.e. decentralised, though this may jeopardise the safety of programme staff.

If a high level of corruption or diversion of funds is suspected, FFW may be preferable to CFW.

**6. Caring responsibilities and livelihoods:** participation in income earning opportunities should not undermine child care or other caring responsibilities as this could increase the risk of malnutrition. Programmes may need to consider employing care providers or providing care facilities (see General nutrition support standard 2 on page 140). Responses should not adversely affect access to

other opportunities, such as other employment or education, or divert household resources from productive activities already in place.

**7. Use of remuneration:** fair remuneration means that the income generated contributes a significant proportion of the resources necessary for food security. The household management of cash or food inputs (including intra-household distribution and end uses) must be understood, as the way cash is given may either defuse or exacerbate existing tensions, and thereby affect food security and the nutrition of household members. Responses that generate income and employment often have multiple food security objectives, including community-level resources that affect food security. For example, repairing roads may improve access to markets and access to health care, while repairing or constructing waterharvesting and irrigation systems may improve productivity.

#### **Food security standard 4: access to markets**

People's safe access to market goods and services as producers, consumers and traders is protected and promoted.

**Key indicators** (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- \_ Food security responses are based on a demonstrated understanding of local markets and economic systems, which informs their design and, where necessary, leads to advocacy for system improvement and policy change (see guidance notes 1-2).
- \_ Producers and consumers have economic and physical access to operating markets, which have a regular supply of basic items, including food at affordable prices (see guidance note 3).
- \_ Adverse effects of food security responses, including food purchases and distribution, on local markets and market suppliers are minimised where possible (see guidance note 4).
- \_ There is increased information and local awareness of market prices and availability, of how markets function and the policies that govern this (see guidance note 5).
- \_ Basic food items and other essential commodities are available (see guidance note 6).
- \_ The negative consequences of extreme seasonal or other abnormal price fluctuations are minimised (see guidance note 7).

#### **Guidance notes**

**1. Market analysis:** the types of market – local, regional, national – and how they are linked to each other should be reviewed. Consideration should be given to access to functioning markets for all affected groups, including vulnerable groups. Responses that remunerate in food, or provide inputs, such as seeds, agricultural tools, shelter materials, etc., should be preceded by a market analysis in relation to the commodity supplied.

Local purchase of any surpluses will support local producers. Imports are likely to reduce local prices. Where inputs such as seeds may not be available on the open market, despite still being accessible to farmers through their own seed supply networks and systems, consideration should be given to the effect of external inputs on such systems.

**2. Advocacy:** markets operate in the wider national and global economies, which influence local market conditions. For example, governmental policies, including pricing and trade policies, influence access and availability. Although actions at this level are beyond the scope of disaster response, analysis of these factors is necessary as there may be opportunities for a joint agency approach, or advocacy to government and other bodies to improve the situation.

**3. Market demand and supply:** economic access to markets is influenced by purchasing power, market prices and availability. Affordability depends on the terms of trade between basic needs (including food, essential agricultural inputs such as seeds, tools, health care, etc.) and income sources (cash crops, livestock, wages, etc). Erosion of assets occurs when deterioration in terms of trade forces people to sell assets (often at low prices) in order to buy basic needs (at inflated prices). Access to markets may also be influenced by the political and security environment, and by cultural or religious considerations, which restrict access by certain groups (such as minorities).

**4. Impact of interventions:** local procurement of food, seeds or other commodities may cause local inflation to the disadvantage of consumers but to the benefit of local producers. Conversely,

imported food aid may drive prices down and act as a disincentive to local food production, increasing the numbers who are food-insecure. Those responsible for procurement should monitor and take account of these effects. Food distribution also affects the purchasing power of beneficiaries, as it is a form of income transfer. Some commodities are easier to sell for a good price than others, e.g. oil versus blended food. The 'purchasing power' associated with a given food or food basket will influence whether it is eaten or sold by the beneficiary household. An understanding of household sales and purchases is important in determining the wider impact of food distribution programmes (see also Food aid management standard 3).

**5. *Transparent market policies:*** local producers and consumers need to be aware of market pricing controls and other policies that influence supply and demand. These may include state pricing and taxation policies, policies influencing movement of commodities across regional boundaries, or local schemes to facilitate trade with neighbouring areas (although in many conflict situations clear policies on these issues may not necessarily exist).

**6. *Essential food items:*** selection of food items for market monitoring depends on local food habits and therefore must be locally determined. The principles of planning nutritionally adequate rations should be applied to deciding what food items are essential in a particular context (see General nutrition support standard 1 on page 137 and Food aid planning standard 1 on page 157).

**7. *Abnormally extreme seasonal price fluctuations*** may adversely affect poor agricultural producers, who have to sell their produce when prices are at their lowest (i.e. after harvest). Conversely, consumers who have little disposable income cannot afford to invest in food stocks, depending instead on small but frequent purchases. They are therefore forced to buy even when prices are high (e.g. during drought). Examples of interventions which can minimise these effects include improved transport systems, diversified food production and cash or food transfers at critical times.

## *Appendix 1*

### **Food Security Checklist for Methodology and Reporting**

#### **Food security assessments should:**

1. include a clear description of the methodology
  - overall design and objectives
  - background and number of assessors (whether they are working individually or in pairs)
  - selection of key informants (are they representative of all groups?)
  - composition of focus or other discussion groups
  - criteria for selecting informants
  - timeframe of the assessment
  - framework for analysis and methodological tools, including PRA tools and techniques;
2. be based on a qualitative approach, including review of secondary sources of quantitative information;
3. use terms correctly e.g. purposive sampling, key informant, focus group, terms for specific techniques;
4. involve local institutions as partners in the assessment process, unless inappropriate e.g. in some conflict situations;
5. employ an appropriate range of PRA tools and techniques (which are applied in sequence to analyse and triangulate findings);
6. involve a representative range of affected population groups or livelihood groupings;
7. describe the limitations or practical constraints of the assessment;
8. describe the coverage of the assessment, including its geographic spread, the range of livelihood groups included and other relevant stratification of the population (e.g. gender, ethnicity, tribal group, etc.);
9. include interviews with representatives of relevant government ministries and public services, traditional leaders, representatives of key civil society organisations (religious groups, local NGOs,

advocacy or pressure groups, farmers' or pastoralists' associations, women's groups) and representatives of each of the livelihood groups under consideration.

**The assessment report findings should cover:**

1. the recent history of food security and relevant policies prior to the current situation;
2. a description of the different livelihood groups and their food security situation prior to the disaster;
3. food security pre-disaster for different livelihood groups;
4. the impact of the disaster on the food system and food security for different livelihood groups;
5. identification of particularly vulnerable livelihood groups or those vulnerable to food insecurity in the present situation;
6. suggested interventions, including means of implementation, advocacy and any additional assessments required;
7. the precise nature, purpose and duration of any food aid response, if a response is considered appropriate. Food aid responses should be justified on the basis of the above data and analysis.

*Appendix 2*

**Food Security Assessment Checklist**

Food security assessments often broadly categorise the affected population into livelihood groupings, according to their sources of, and strategies for obtaining, income or food. This may also include a breakdown of the population according to wealth groups or strata. It is important to compare the prevailing situation with the history of food security pre-disaster.

So-called 'average years' may be considered as a baseline. The specific roles and vulnerabilities of women and men, and the implications for household food security should be considered.

Consideration of intrahousehold food security differences may also be important.

This checklist covers the broad areas that are usually considered in a food security assessment.

Additional information must also be collected on the wider context of the disaster (e.g. its political context, population numbers and movements, etc.) and possibly in relation to other relevant sectors (nutrition, health, water and shelter). The checklist must be adapted to suit the local context and the objectives of the assessment. More detailed checklists are available in, for example, the Field Operations Guide of USAID (1998).

**Food security of livelihood groups**

1. Are there groups in the community who share the same livelihood strategies? How can these be categorised according to their main sources of food or income?

**Food security pre-disaster (baseline)**

2. How did the different livelihood groups acquire food or income before the disaster? For an average year in the recent past, what were their sources of food and income?
3. How did these different sources of food and income vary between seasons in a normal year? (Constructing a seasonal calendar may be useful.)
4. Looking back over the past 5 or 10 years, how has food security varied from year to year? (Constructing a timeline or history of good and bad years may be useful.)
5. What kind of assets, savings or other reserves are owned by the different livelihood groups (e.g. food stocks, cash savings, livestock holdings, investments, credit, unclaimed debt, etc.)?
6. Over a period of a week or a month, what do household expenditures include, and what proportion is spent on each item?
7. Who is responsible for management of cash in the household, and on what is cash spent?
8. How accessible is the nearest market for obtaining basic goods? (Consider distance, security, ease of mobility, availability of market information, etc.)
9. What is the availability and price of essential goods, including food?
10. Prior to the disaster, what were the average terms of trade between essential sources of income and food, e.g. wages to food, livestock to food, etc.?

**Food security during disaster**

11. How has the disaster affected the different sources of food and income for each of the livelihood groups identified?
12. How has it affected the usual seasonal patterns of food security for the different groups?
13. How has it affected access to markets, market availability and prices of essential goods?

14. For different livelihood groups, what are the different coping strategies and what proportion of people are engaged in them?
15. How has this changed as compared with the pre-disaster situation?
16. Which group or population is most affected?
17. What are the short- and medium-term effects of coping strategies on people's financial and other assets?
18. 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?

### *Appendix 3*

#### **Food Security Responses**

The range of interventions possible to support, protect and promote food security in emergencies is wide. The list below is not exhaustive.

Each intervention must be designed to suit the local context and strategy for supporting food security, and therefore is unique in its objectives and design. It is important to consider a range of responses and programming options based on analysis and consideration of expressed needs. 'Off-the-shelf' interventions that do not take account of local priorities rarely work. The responses are categorised into three groups, which relate to the Food Security standards 2-4:

- \_ primary production
- \_ income and employment
- \_ access to market goods and services.

General food distribution provides free food assistance directly to households and thus is of great importance in ensuring food security in the short term.

#### **Primary production**

\_ ***Distribution of seeds, tools and fertiliser:*** provided to encourage agricultural production, as starter packs to returnees, or to diversify crops. Often combined with agricultural extension services and possibly technical training.

\_ ***Seed vouchers and fairs:*** based on the provision of seed vouchers to potential buyers. Organising a seed fair to bring together potential sellers stimulates local seed procurement systems while allowing buyers access to a wide range of seeds.

\_ ***Local agricultural extension services***

\_ ***Training and education in relevant skills***

\_ ***Livestock interventions:*** can include animal health measures; emergency destocking; restocking of livestock; distribution of livestock fodder and nutritional supplementation; livestock refuges; and provision of alternative water sources.

\_ ***Distribution of fish nets and gear, or hunting implements***

\_ ***Promotion of food processing***

#### **Income and employment**

\_ ***Cash-for-work (CFW)*** provides food-insecure households with opportunities for paid work.

\_ ***Food-for-work (FFW)*** provides food-insecure households with opportunities for paid work that at the same time produce outputs of benefit to themselves and the community.

\_ ***Food-for-recovery (FFR)***: a less structured form of food-for-work. Activities can contribute to initial recovery and should not require outside technical supervision.

\_ ***Income generating schemes*** allow people to diversify their sources of income in small-scale, self-employment business schemes. These include support of people in the management, supervision and implementation of their businesses.

#### **Access to market goods and services**

\_ ***Market and infrastructure support:*** includes transportation to allow producers to take advantage of distant markets.

\_ ***Destocking:*** provides herders with a good price for their livestock in times of drought, when there is pressure on water supplies and grazing and market prices of livestock are falling.

\_ ***Fair price shops:*** sale of basic items at controlled or subsidised prices, or in exchange for vouchers or goods in kind.

\_ ***Food or cash vouchers:*** for exchange in shops for food and other goods.

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Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET):

<http://www.fews.net>

Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS):

<http://www.fivims.net/index.jsp>

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