



Global food security assessment guidelines

A step-by-step guide
for National Societies



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation's Global Agenda (2006–2010)

Over the next five years, the collective focus of the Federation will be on achieving the following goals and priorities:

Our goals

Goal 1: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Goal 2: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Goal 3: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.

Goal 4: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

Our priorities

Improving our local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.

Scaling up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction.

Increasing significantly our HIV/AIDS programming and advocacy.

Renewing our advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, and promoting disaster risk reduction.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System
FS	Food security
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
International Federation	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organization
MUAC	Mid-upper-arm circumference
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PLHIV	People living with HIV
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization



1 Introduction

Who this guide is for

This guide aims to assist National Society staff and volunteers throughout the world in undertaking food security assessments. It does not require prior knowledge or experience of food security. The guide is a practical tool related to the *Food security and nutrition policy*, adopted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) in 2003, which encourages National Societies to conduct food security assessments.

*International Federation Food security and nutrition policy, 2003**

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 become necessary when conditions in a country, region, or local area change, leading to increased vulnerability within communities. As a result, people may no longer be able to meet their nutritional needs. This can be due to either a sudden onset hazard, or a slow but consistent deterioration in the local situation. A number of factors may trigger food insecurity, such as drought, floods, landslides, locust infestations, outbreaks of conflict, influx of refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs), and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

How to use this guide

This guide provides National Societies with a practical tool for undertaking initial food security assessments. It covers the different stages of a food security assessment, and offers techniques and examples for carrying out such an assessment. The guide is valid for both rural and urban settings.

Throughout this guide, you will come across definitions relating to food security and tips for conducting food assessments. Where relevant, specific references are provided, linked to the documents listed in the References section¹ (see page 59). These provide an excellent source of additional information for those wishing to read further on the topic.

Other relevant food security and assessment material developed by the International Federation and available for use includes:

- *Food Security Training Modules*. International Federation, 2007.
- *Guidelines for Emergency Assessment*. International Federation, 2005.
- *Food security case studies*. International Federation, 2003 - 2006.
- *Project Planning Process*. International Federation, 2002.
- *Better Programming Initiative - Options to improve the impact of programmes*. International Federation, 2002.
- *Disaster Preparedness Training Manual*. International Federation, 2001.
- *What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment*. International Federation, 2006.
- *How to do a VCA - A practical step-by-step guide for Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers*. International Federation, 2007.
- *VCA toolbox with reference sheets*. International Federation, 2007.

¹ The International Federation would like to credit and thank these and other organizations for making the information available to the wider humanitarian community.



David Bebbler/The Times

2 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, processed, manufactured, and/or imported. For example, food is available because it can be found in markets and shops; it has been produced on local farms or in home gardens; or it has arrived as part of food aid. This refers to all available food in the area, and includes fresh, as well as packaged, food.

Food availability can be affected by disruptions to the food transport and production systems, due to blocked roads, failed crops or changes in import and export tariffs, amongst other factors. Such occurrences can influence the amount of food coming into an area. In addition, food availability is dependent upon seasonal patterns in food production and trading.

Food access refers to the way in which different people obtain available food. Normally, we access food through a combination of means. This may include: home production, use of left-over stocks, purchase, barter, borrowing, sharing, gifts from relatives, and provisions by welfare systems or food aid. Food access is ensured when everyone within a community has adequate financial or other resources to obtain the food necessary for a nutritious diet. Access depends on a household's available income and its distribution within the household, as well as on the price of food. It also depends on markets, and on the social and institutional entitlements/rights of individuals.

Food access can be negatively influenced by unemployment, physical insecurity (e.g. during conflicts), loss of coping options (e.g. border closures preventing seasonal job migration), or the collapse of safety-net institutions which once protected people on low incomes.

Food utilization is the way in which people use food. It is dependent upon a number of inter-related factors: the quality of the food and its method of preparation, storage facilities, and the nutritional knowledge and health status of the individual consuming the food. For example, some diseases do not allow for optimal absorption of nutrients, whereas growth requires increased intake of certain nutrients.

Food utilization is often reduced by factors such as endemic disease, poor sanitation, lack of appropriate nutritional knowledge, or culturally-prescribed taboos (often related to age or gender) that affect a certain group's or family member's access to nutritious food. Food utilization may also be adversely affected if people have limited resources for preparing food, for example due to a lack of fuel or cooking utensils.

Any imbalance in the above-mentioned factors can lead to food insecurity.

Definition

Food security

A person, household or community, region or nation is **food secure** when all members have physical and economic access at all times 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.

Food insecurity

Examples

Inadequate food availability

- Severe drought can deplete harvests or kill livestock.
- War or conflict can impede food imports.
- Heavy flooding can damage road networks and disrupt food trade.
- Avian influenza can affect peri-urban poultry farming if birds die, or are culled as part of national containment policy.
- Increased fuel prices may lead to reduced activity in mills, thereby affecting the quantity of flour available for sale.
- Locust infestations can diminish food stocks or ruin harvests.
- The agricultural workforce may be depleted due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, leading to a reduction in primary food production.
- Shortages of seeds or fertilizers can reduce yields.

Regional/local level

Inadequate food access

- Loss of employment may result in reduced household income and a lower budget for food.
- Seasonal price fluctuations can reduce a household's ability to buy certain foods at specific times of the year.
- Economic recession may stop local shopkeepers from extending credit to their customers.
- High medical fees or funeral costs can reduce a household's budget for food.
- Lack of education and/or skills may reduce job opportunities and have an impact on family income.
- A broken bridge can hamper access to local markets for selling or buying food.
- Low prices for livestock can reduce availability of cash to purchase food.
- Conflict may ruin a social welfare system or hinder charitable donations.

Household level

Inadequate food utilization

- Frequent power cuts can hamper food storage and lead to deterioration of food.
- Chronic diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, may increase nutritional needs.
- Unsafe drinking water can cause chronic diarrhoea and result in decreased absorption of nutrients.
- Strong cultural beliefs may prevent people from eating certain healthy food products.
- Social customs may dictate setting aside nutritious foods for certain members of the family and/or visitors, thereby making them unavailable to other household members.
- People with mobility or economic problems may resort to monotonous diets requiring little preparation.
- Lack of nutritional knowledge can lead to inadequate diets or extensive vitamin loss during food preparation.
- Lack of cooking utensils or fuel may hinder adequate food preparation.

Individual level

Vulnerability to household food insecurity occurs at a specific moment in time, and is directly related to a household's composition, its assets and the community to which it belongs. Food insecurity results from a combination of the following three components:

- **External hazards**, over which a community has no control. These include: exposure to climatic hazards such as cyclones, droughts and flooding; economic recession; social unrest and political upheaval. All of these can disrupt daily livelihood activities and lead to a loss of assets.
- **Underlying vulnerabilities**: these cannot be changed by the individual and relate to factors such as

Definition

Vulnerability

Vulnerability refers to a household's or community's level of risk to threats to their lives and livelihood*.

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

In order to minimize the impact of such 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 worsened when superimposed on a situation of widespread structural poverty.

* See page 10 for definition of livelihood.

political and social structures, poverty levels, and physical location. They dictate a community's resilience to adverse changes.

- **Internal capacity to cope:** this relates to the resources, skills, and networks which enable a household or community to overcome a difficult situation. Internal capacity is present in *all* households.

Some households may be better able to cope with certain hazards than others. For example, following a flood, households with savings or those receiving remittances from abroad may be able to replace lost assets more quickly than households with no access to such resources.

Other households may lose their capacity to cope more gradually, when consistently exposed to hazards or long-lasting disease in the family. Such a slow erosion of coping capacity is typical of situations involving prolonged conflict, economic recession and/or environmental degradation. Households adapt slowly as the situation deteriorates, and may slide into a chronic state of food insecurity. This is often more difficult to detect than situations of food insecurity caused by rapid onset disasters, where physical damage is more obvious.

Example

South Wollo, Ethiopia

- **External hazard:** Recurrent drought.
- **Underlying vulnerability:** This is a rural community with little infrastructure, no health care or jobs, and dependent upon seasonal rainfall in terms of livelihood.

- **Internal capacity to cope:**

Scenario 1: Household members borrow money from an uncle in the city to buy food, since they do not want to sell their land. Otherwise, they will have to migrate.

Scenario 2: Another household sells its animals and uses the money to buy food. The family hopes to be in a position to buy more animals the following year, when the rains come.

Example

Uraba, Colombia

- **External hazard:** Protracted conflict leading to displacement.
- **Underlying vulnerability:** As a result of a 10 year-old conflict, a community of IDPs has been forced to abandon its farms and move to the periphery of the city. The land people are occupying is prone to flooding and has severe sewage problems during the rainy season. They find it difficult to obtain employment, as they do not have the necessary skills for urban jobs, or the capital to start up their own business.

- **Internal capacity to cope:**

Scenario 1: A household sends its eldest son to the capital city to search for employment and remit money back home.

Scenario 2: Household members enter into an agreement with a local restaurant to use its freezer to make flavoured ices, which they then sell in the street.

Scenario 3: A household joins a church-led sewing class, with a view to learning a new skill.

All households hope to be able to return to their land in the future.

Since poor people have fewer resources, they tend to have less capacity to cope with external stresses and hazards. However, they are not necessarily the worst affected when disaster strikes. People with more assets may also have lost everything, and may not 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 will use **coping strategies** in order to reduce risks to their lives and livelihoods, regardless of their economic or social status.

Definition Coping strategies

Coping strategies are activities people use as a *means of getting through difficult times*, brought on by events affecting their livelihood and way of living.

Food security assessments should take into account the different coping strategies of communities and households. Who is using *what kind of coping strategy*, and *how well is it working*?

There are different stages of coping. Early coping strategies are not necessarily abnormal: they 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 a household's future food security. These may involve the sale of land, distress migration on the part of whole families, or intensive use of wood leading to deforestation.

Some coping strategies employed by women and girls, such as prostitution, tend to expose them to sexual violence, physical harm and higher risk of HIV infection. Migration generally increases the risk of HIV transmission.

Coping strategies may also affect the environment, for example through over-exploitation of commonly-owned natural resources. It is important to protect and support food security before people begin using more damaging strategies, having exhausted all other means of coping.

(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 the activities needed to sustain a means of living, including ways of obtaining 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, and enhance their own well-being as well as that of future generations.

Examples of different kinds of livelihoods include:

- Unskilled daily waged labour, such as loading and off-loading cargo, domestic help, farm work, garbage recycling;
- Skilled labour, such as carpentry, bus driving, factory work;
- Self-employment, such as shop-keeping, fishing;
- Salaried administrative or professional work, such as nursing, teaching, banking, veterinary services;
- Family-run businesses where no salaries are paid, such as a restaurants, laundrettes;
- Unemployment, dependent on welfare or social networks;
- Livestock ownership with additional involvement in crop cultivation (mixed farming);
- Agricultural production combined with small business. Agricultural production refers to cash crops and/or crops for personal consumption, and
- Pastoral activities.

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

(Adapted from reference 4)

Food insecurity may not only cause lasting damage to future generations and the environment, it can also cause physical harm to individuals. It is important to realise that food insecurity can lead to **malnutrition** and, if prolonged, even death.

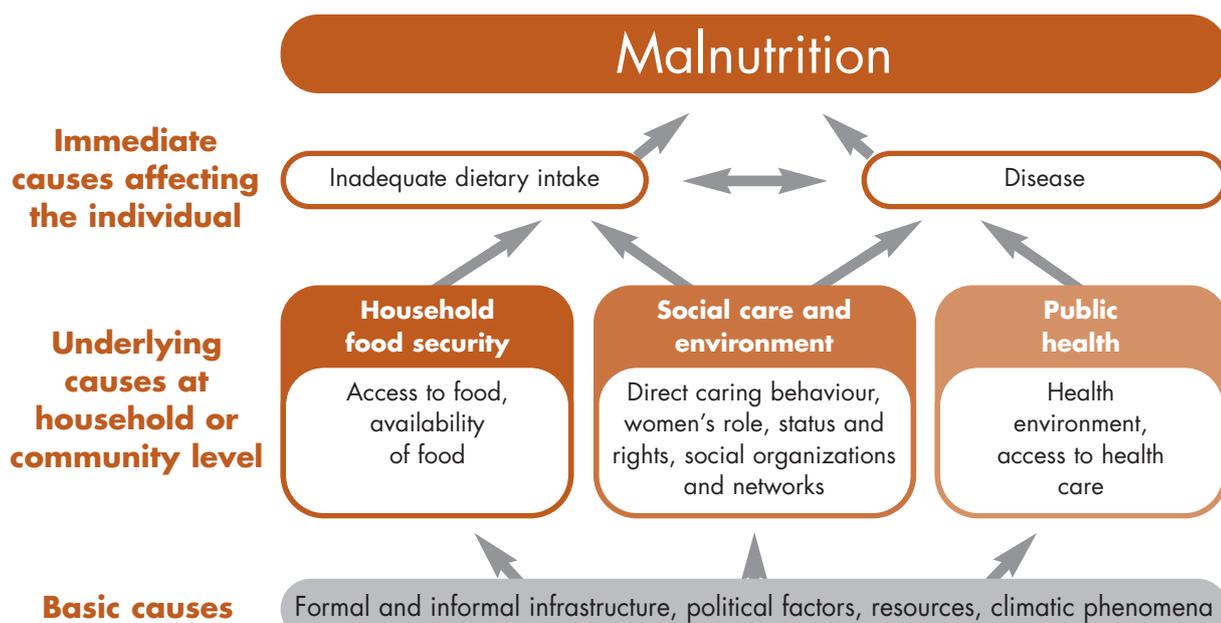
However, it is also important to recognise that malnutrition is not necessarily caused by food insecurity. There are numerous other causes of malnutrition, including illness, unhealthy environments, unsafe drinking water, and insufficient parental care. The figure (see page 11) illustrates how both inadequate dietary intake and/or disease can lead to malnutrition. Food insecurity is only one possible underlying cause of malnutrition.

Coping strategies sometimes have an underlying risk which can increase vulnerability.

Several examples are provided below:

- Reduction in the amount of food eaten or in the quality of diet can lead to declining health and nutritional status;
- Reduction in expenditure on school fees and healthcare undermines human capital;
- Prostitution and external relationships for purposes of securing food undermine dignity, lead to social exclusion and increase the risk of HIV or other sexually-transmitted diseases;
- Sale of household assets may reduce future productive capacity;
- Failure to repay loans may affect future access to credit;
- Overuse of natural resources, such as excessive fishing and collection of firewood, reduces their availability;
- Travel to unsafe areas for work or for gathering food or fuel exposes people (especially women and children) to the risk of violence;
- Production or trading in forbidden goods risks arrest and imprisonment;
- Separation of families – particularly of mothers from children – may lead to poor standards in child care and result in malnutrition;
- Migration by a family member to a different city or country in search of work in order to send money home, leaving the remaining adult responsible for all household tasks and care-giving, results in unbalanced dependency ratios.

(Adapted from Reference 3)



Adapted from UNICEF's 'Framework of Underlying Causes of Malnutrition and Mortality'.

An individual's diet and health are negatively influenced by poor feeding practices, absence of health centres, and reduced availability of clean water and/or medicine. These are the *underlying causes* of disease and/or inadequate dietary intake which, in turn, may lead to malnutrition. Furthermore, as illustrated, these conditions may have *basic causes* – often very difficult to control – which influence public health, food security, and the social environment. These include: political factors; availability of health, education and basic infrastructure (i.e. electricity, water, and transport); quality of available resources (i.e. land for pasture or cultivation, drinking water); and climatic phenomena (i.e. rainfall patterns, cyclone and hurricane seasons) and proneness to earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

This provides us with a useful framework for linking underlying causes, in order to better understand the risks to households vulnerable to food insecurity. It enables connections to be made between various causes in determining the likelihood of malnutrition – whether due to food insecurity, public health inadequacies, or other social and environmental factors. Appropriate solutions can then be identified.



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 or not there is a need to respond.

The assessment must collect information that will enable an accurate analysis of the situation and identify threats to life, human dignity, health and livelihoods. This involves *consulting the affected community and local authorities*.

There are two ways in which assessments can be used:

- to design a programme, or
- to monitor or evaluate an existing programme in order to adjust it.

This guide focuses on the first of these.

An assessment is part of a larger process, with the ultimate objective of **saving lives, protecting or restoring livelihoods**, and **reducing a community's vulnerability**. Each assessment must address whether or not the National Society should respond to the situation at hand.

An assessment is the all-important first step prior to developing, implementing and monitoring a programme, as illustrated below.

Definition

Assessment

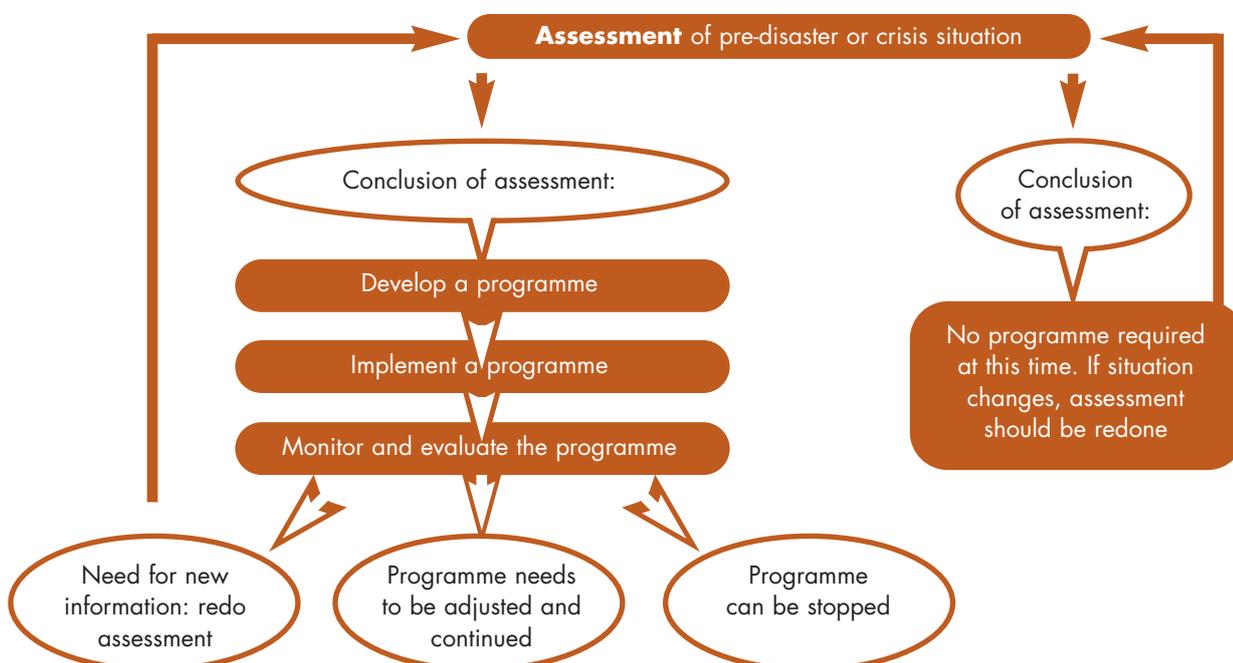
Assessments provide an understanding of a hazard and a clear analysis of threats to life, dignity, health and livelihoods. In consultation with the relevant authorities and community members, an assessment will help determine whether assistance is required and, if so, the kind of assistance needed.

(Adapted from Reference 3)

Note

A comprehensive assessment not only identifies the *needs* of a community but also provides an *understanding* of the context and dynamics that have led or are leading to a crisis.

(Adapted from Reference 5)





David Bebbler/The Times

4 What is a food security assessment?

What is the objective of a food security assessment?

The aim of a food security assessment is no different from that of a general assessment. However, it focuses more specifically on how successful people are in maintaining a secure food environment for themselves. The **general objective of a food security assessment** is to understand the severity of the situation and why this is the case. This includes identifying those who are food insecure and those vulnerable to becoming so, and determining whether or not there is a need to intervene in the short and/or long term.

The assessment will focus on evaluating the food security situation of various groups of people within the affected population. In addition, food security assessments can help to predict future food insecurity or the duration of an insecure food period. This is crucial for programming.

Questions to raise 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 the crisis situation?
- Who appears to be most food insecure?
- Who is most at risk of becoming food insecure?
- Are people receiving assistance?
- 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 they receive a salary, are self-employed or a mixture of both. We also need to understand **the assets they have available** to them. Examples of these include: carpentry tools; a house; farm land or grazing fields; a street vendor's licence; or fishing equipment. Other elements to consider are: people's level of skills, their health status, their access to credit when needed, and the availability of support networks within the community. In addition, we need to understand **who can access these resources** and **whether this access changes over time**. For example: access to limited water sources for animals during the dry season may be restricted to those who can pay; the local garment factory may only employ friends of the foreman; a bank account may be required for opening a restaurant.

More specifically, we need to know **how people meet their food needs**. This may include purchasing food in small quantities in local shops, supplementing their needs through their own production, or being reliant on cash crops. Livelihood patterns will affect the ways in which people meet their food needs; at the same time, the composition of a household will affect actual food needs in terms of quantities required. Furthermore, the broader economic, climatic and political context will impact on a household's ability to ensure an adequate diet throughout the year.

The assessment will need to compare the *normal* situation with the *current* situation at both household and community levels. Comparisons between the two will allow you to determine how and why the situation has deteriorated. This is the first step towards understanding needs that arise due to a specific hazard or long-lasting crisis, and in determining the best response.

Food security is **not** necessarily a **static** situation; there are likely to be normal fluctuations during the year in terms of food availability, access and utilization. This applies to both rural and urban areas.

For example:

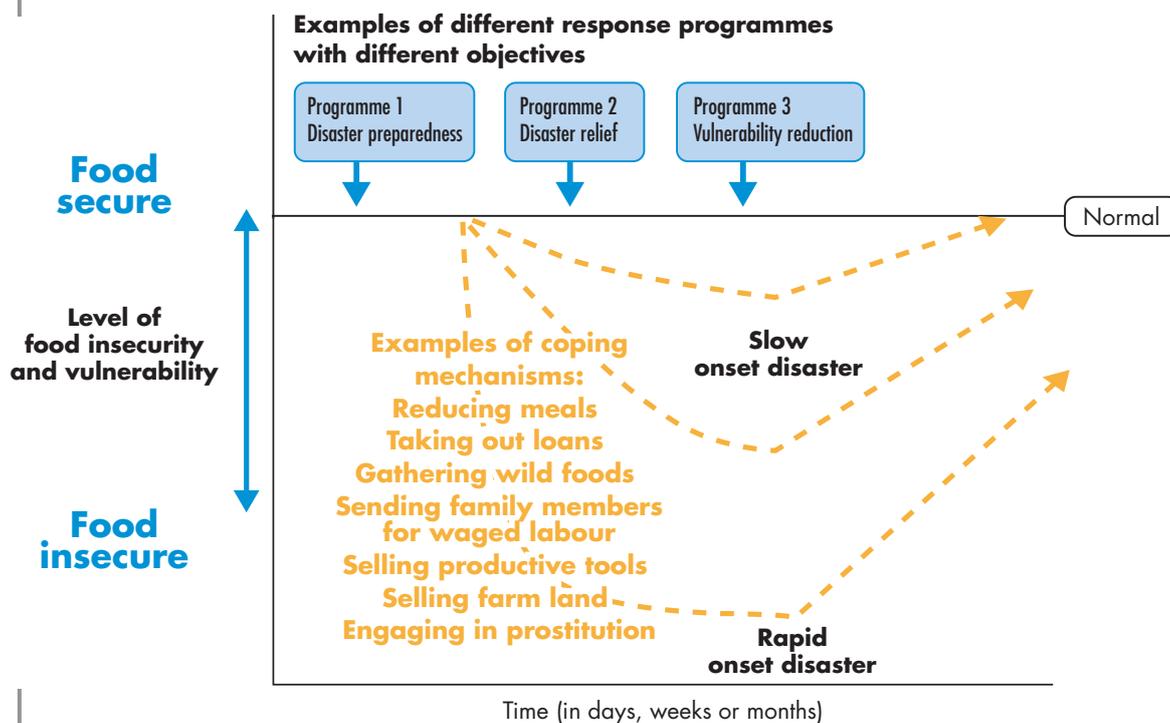
- the price of lamb in cities can triple prior to certain religious holidays;
- a salesman buying eggs or vegetables in rural areas for re-sale in peri-urban markets may vary his prices daily based on the purchasing power² of his clients;
- a landslide in an urban slum will provoke hygiene risks associated with food storage and preparation, depending on whether it is the rainy or dry season.

An assessment of the effects of a flood during the 'hunger gap'³ will need to consider that food stocks were in any event likely to be lower and prices higher at that particular time of year, and not necessarily related to the flood.

It is important to assess which changes are normal and which are due to a specific hazard or a long-lasting crisis. It is also important to note that *each situation of food insecurity requires a different response*. Food aid may help save lives, whereas other programmes may be more appropriate in supporting livelihoods. These do not always include food aid. Only a thorough analysis can help decide on the most appropriate response for a specific context.

When to conduct a food security assessment

Many different situations lead to 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 that they have few means to survive. Others may lose their assets slowly (as in a slow onset or long-lasting crisis). The figure below illustrates how food security can be affected over time, by different kinds of crises.



² Purchasing power refers to a household's ability to buy food and non-food items regularly, based on available income and on the value of assets or access to credit.

³ The 'hunger gap' refers to the period before the main harvest, when food stores are often low and people sometimes need to reduce their food intake in order to survive to the next harvest.

Communities will use different coping mechanisms in order to maintain their level of food security. Early warning signs of food insecurity vary and may include: reducing the number of meals; taking out loans; selling clothes; noting unusual increases in food prices; selling productive tools or farm land; seeing unusual population movements; migrating for work; supplementing income with extra jobs; children no longer going to school; working longer shifts; moving to a smaller house; walking instead of using public transport; using up bank savings, and increasingly engaging in prostitution.

Although different assistance programmes implemented at different times will each have a different impact, their overall aim remains the same: to restore food security to pre-crisis levels, either directly or indirectly (i.e. bending the curve back to normal). (See figure page 16).

The main principles of a food security assessment

1. Define a *clear objective* for your food security assessment. The more you wish to find out, the more detailed and/or wide-ranging your assessment will need to 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?
- How does a normal situation compare with changes due to the hazard or new crisis?
- Who appears to be most food insecure? Who is most at risk of becoming food insecure?
- Are people receiving assistance?
- Can people manage without assistance from the National Society?
- If not, how can the National Society support coping strategies? (Remember to take into account the mandate, experience and capacity of your National Society – these are not the same in every country).

Specific questions will depend on actual assessment objectives.

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 cannot decide if they need your assistance, and what kind of support would be most appropriate.

5. Be *efficient* and *realistic*: Do not collect information you will not use, and take into account your capacity, as well as the results of past interventions. There is no need to know everything in an assessment.

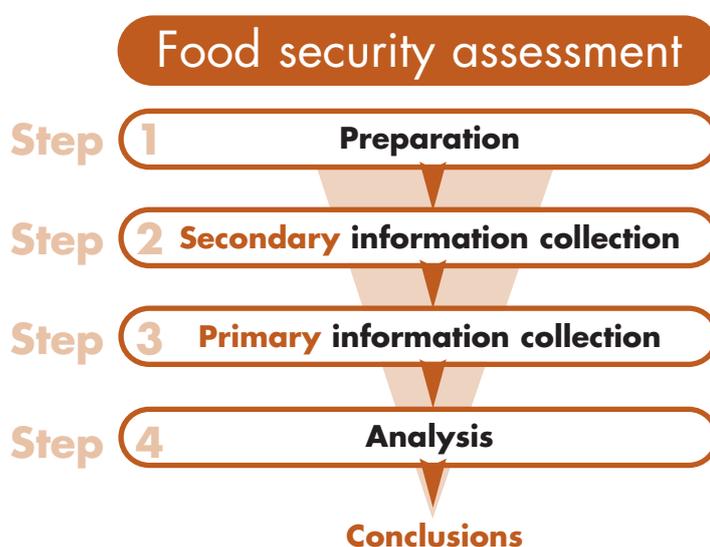
6. Ensure the collection of *quality information* by focusing on finding the right sources of information. Good information allows for better analysis and decision-making. Cross-check your information by consulting various sources (i.e. verify, look for confirmation). Compare primary and secondary information sources (see Section 5), speak to different people, and compare the information you receive from different sources.

7. Focus on *comparing communities*: It is generally better to visit a greater number of communities, and interview less people in each one, than to visit only a few places and speak with everybody. Do not go only to key towns (where most aid organizations will be based), but also to smaller communities, even if difficult to access.

8. No matter how objective you try to be during an assessment, everyone runs the risk of being biased or prejudiced. Bias or partiality is introduced into an assessment when it gives undue importance to a specific geographical area or group of people. This may happen unintentionally, due to logistical and time constraints. You should be aware that the conclusions of the assessment may favour 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

Generally, the purpose of a response programme is **to save lives, protect or restore livelihoods**, and **reduce vulnerability** in the community. More specifically, food security programmes aim **to improve food availability, access and utilization**.

Practically, this involves developing a number of programmes **to support**:

- the **primary production of food**, such as raising crops, rearing livestock, or fishing;
- **income-generation or employment**, for example through skills training or business start-up loans;
- **development, protection or recovery of assets**, for instance by replacing lost assets or setting up cooperatives to build up communal assets;
- **access to markets**, through projects such as community-based road construction.

Note A programme that aims to *improve the food security* of a community or a household does not necessarily have to provide food directly; a *programme can be non-food related* and still help to improve food security.

At present, many National Society programmes are concerned with providing **direct food aid**. It is useful to be aware of the many different forms assistance can take, before undertaking your food security assessment. (See Chapter 7 for additional details on appropriate food security responses).

Possible initiatives to reduce vulnerability and food insecurity	Examples from National Societies
Food aid in the form of food ration distributions provides immediate relief to a household, saves lives and/or increases household assets (e.g. general food distribution, targeted food distribution, home-based care food ration distribution).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Belize hurricane response (2001/2003) ■ Kenya, Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland) drought response (2000) ■ Zimbabwe food aid as part of home-based care programmes for people living with HIV (PLHIV) (2002-2003)
Food for work provides food-insecure households with opportunities for gainful employment, leading to outputs which benefit them and the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethiopia drought response (2002) ■ Sri Lanka tsunami response – rubble clearance and house building (2004) ■ Nicaragua hurricane – resettlement construction (1998)
Cash for work provides food-insecure households with opportunities for paid work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethiopia drought response (2000/2002)
Distribution of seeds, tools and fertilizer encourages agricultural production and crop diversification. This can include starter packs for returnees, and be combined with technical training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cambodia floods – rice seed distribution (2002) ■ Liberia (2002/2006) ■ Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala (1999)
Livestock interventions include animal health measures and veterinary services; de-stocking or restocking of livestock; fodder distribution; provision of alternative water sources; and support to pastoralists in transporting livestock to alternative grazing areas during severe dry spells.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pakistan earthquake – fodder provision for livestock during winter months (2005) ■ Kenya drought – relocation of livestock to coastal areas during severe dry spell (1997) ■ Honduras (2003/2005)
Income generating allows people to diversify their sources of income on a small scale. Self-employment business schemes include support to people in the management, supervision and implementation of their businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Zimbabwe – social support groups involved in soap-making ■ Swaziland – poultry breeding (2002)
Training and education in relevant skills allows people to earn an income (for example in carpentry or bicycle repair).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Indonesia tsunami – training in boat-making and provision of workshops and materials to replace lost vessels (2004)
Distributing fishing nets and equipment, or hunting implements allows people to obtain food.	
Local agricultural projects can provide a mix of production and income-generating activities (i.e. animal husbandry, poultry projects and home gardening). By producing fruit and vegetables and raising small animals, nutritious food is made available for household consumption, sale and/or barter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rwanda – planting of seedlings for plant diversification (2000) ■ Swaziland – backyard gardening providing quality food and revenue (2002-present)
Food or cash vouchers for exchange in shops for food and other goods, or direct cash distribution .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Niger – cash distribution to female members of households (2005) ■ Occupied Palestinian Territories – urban voucher scheme (2002) ■ Zambia (2006) ■ Indonesia – cash distribution to replace lost assets (2005)
Microfinance projects , including provision of credit and methods for saving assets, which may involve grants, loans, cattle banks, and cooperative savings accounts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rwanda – credit scheme for small livestock raising (2000) ■ Nepal – revolving funds (2003)
Awareness-raising and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Zimbabwe – nutrition education in home-based care for PLHIV (2002/2003) ■ Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso – covering food stores before anticipated locust invasion (2004/2005)
Support and technical assistance to government services	
Small irrigation and water projects provide support for agriculture or livestock.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala – post-hurricane rehabilitation projects (1999/2003)



5 How to conduct a food security assessment

Step 1: Preparation

Step 2: Secondary information collection

Step 3: Primary information collection

Step 4: Analysis

Undertaking an assessment is not a rigid process. The collection of secondary data does not have to be completed before you start collecting primary data. The most important consideration is **to possess all of the necessary information before you begin analysing the data and drawing 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 by the team as part of Step 3 of the assessment process.

Obtaining **secondary information** means accessing existing information (secondary data). This information will have already been collected by others for other purposes prior to the food security assessment. It will be gathered during Step 2 of the assessment process.

Step 1:

Preparation of a 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 **Determine the areas/communities** you will visit for the assessment (see text box, page 22).
- 4 Find out whether **other organizations** are carrying out assessments, where and why.
- 5 Establish your assessment **budget**, and arrange for a local language interpreter, if needed.
- 6 **Inform the government/local authorities** of your plans.
- 7 **Involve your colleagues** from the relevant National Society branches.
- 8 **Clarify whether you need special authorization** to access certain areas, and obtain this if necessary.

Definition

Terms of reference provide an overview of your team's responsibilities and tasks 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 detail 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 **transport** for the whole period of the assessment.
- 10 **Prepare a travel plan** and ascertain whether or not the plan is logistically feasible within the given timeframe. Try to include a variety of locations or neighbourhoods, so that you can detect variations between them.
- 11 **Begin preparing your methodology** for the next steps. List the secondary information you need and how to gather this (Step 2). Consider who you will interview as sources of primary information, the questions you will ask and the techniques you will use (Step 3).
- 12 Try to **include a female interviewer** if you go to areas where women and men generally do not mix in public.

Tip

How to define the assessment area

Based on initial information, you may already have an idea about where the assessment should take place.

This may be the most affected area; it could also be surrounding areas that have become overcrowded with affected or displaced people. There is no clear rule, except that in the case of a sudden onset hazard you need to listen carefully to governments, local authorities, NGOs and other agencies. When your assessment relates to a slow onset disaster, you will need to be careful in your selection of the area, as per Step 2.

In cities, try to get an accurate overview of the different neighbourhoods, and their social and physical infrastructure before you visit. City layouts are usually more difficult for outsiders to understand. Local knowledge will undoubtedly help you.

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 into account when you select your areas, since not every organization will have this advantage.

Be aware that *you may need to adjust your plans based on information obtained during the assessment*. For example, you may learn that the neighbourhood you intended to visit is inaccessible because of damaged buildings; that the road you anticipated travelling on is closed due to flooding; or that people have moved elsewhere to stay with relatives. You might also be informed by reliable sources that the communities you planned to visit are food secure, and you may therefore decide to prioritize other areas. In each case, you must adopt a practical approach to determine the best way to find the people you are interested in assessing.

Tip

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

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

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

What to take on a food security assessment:

- Maps (official or self-made maps of the region)
- Information concerning administrative boundaries
- Clothing or badges that identify the National Society
- National Society identity card
- First aid kit
- Pencils, pens, paper and calculator
- 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 for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating will have totally different objectives.

Example 1

The objective of an emergency food security assessment

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

This example applies to both rural and urban settings. The aim is to determine whether or not people are in need of emergency relief aid. To what extent can they manage without assistance and why? What coping mechanisms are they using?

Key questions for this type of assessment are as follows:

- 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 food, where and why? Who is primarily affected? Why can't people help themselves? Why can't the government 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 can food be most easily obtained? What are the costs? What are locally-available resources and capacities to transport, store and distribute food?
- What facilities and utensils do people use for cooking and storing food? Can collective feeding centres help meet the needs of people lacking cooking facilities?
- What non-food assistance is needed and why (e.g. water and/or seeds)? When is non-food assistance needed? Who needs non-food assistance?
- What are people doing to cope with the situation? Who is able to manage and for how long? Who is unable to manage?
- Where are people staying? Have they moved to safer areas? Have they congregated in public spaces or have they moved out all together, for example to stay with relatives?

Example 2

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

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

Key questions for this type of assessment are set out below:

- 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 currently the main problems of the community?
- How is the community responding to these problems? Is their response adequate to resolve all of the problems? If not, why not? How long can the population sustain these solutions?
- What is the current situation with regard to services such as health, quality and quantity of water, housing and schooling?
- What is the composition of the average 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? Which are the specific vulnerable groups requiring assistance?

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

- description of the background and current context in which the food security assessment will take place, including National Society activities in the area;
- objectives of the assessment, including its purpose and what needs to be found out;
- list of activities to be undertaken by the team or individual members;
- expected output, such as a list of recommendations for food aid, a plan for meeting food security needs and proposals regarding the National Society's response to this crisis;
- timetable including the number of weeks needed to do the assessment and write up the results;
- list of the team and of each person's expertise or area of responsibility for the assessment; and
- budget (optional).

See Annex 2 for examples.

Step 2:

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 clarify the context within the affected region/area** (acting as baseline information with which to compare your primary information);
- **to guide you in determining the primary information** you still need 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 (see 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 collect. The *quality* of the information will vary. Secondary information will often be found in the national capital, and at provincial and district town levels. National Society staff and volunteers are also important sources of information. *Institutional memory* is valuable, and consulting colleagues involved in previous emergencies and assessments can produce reliable information.

Tip

Quality check of secondary data

The following questions will help in judging how accurate and useful the information is for the purposes of your assessment:

- What is the original purpose of the data or publication?
- What is the information source?
- Is the source normally considered to be 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)

The following are some of **the most common sources** of secondary information:

Secondary data from documents

- Government documents, for example data on demographics, infrastructure and agriculture
- Official statistics
- Project reports from National Societies, ICRC and NGOs
- Project evaluations
- Reports from 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
- Relief website – www.reliefweb.int
- Urban Food Security – www.ruaf.org
- Natural disasters – www.osei.noaa.gov
- Food security research – www.ifpri.org
- Global website on food security – www.eldis.org/food/index.htm
- Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) – www.fivims.net/index.jsp
- Resource centres on urban agriculture and food security (RUAF) – www.ruaf.org
- Operational Significant Event Imagery – www.osei.noaa.gov
- International Food Policy Research Institute – www.ifpri.org
- UNOCHA news site – www.irinnews.org
- WFP – www.wfp.org
- UNHCR – www.unhcr.org
- UNICEF – www.unicef.org
- FAO – www.fao.org
- WHO – www.who.int
- UNOCHA – www.unocha.org
- ILO – www.ilo.org
- Humanitarian Information Centres – www.humanitarianinfo.org
- Hazard Research Centre – www.benfieldhrc.org
- Livelihoods Network – www.livelihoods.org
- ProVention Consortium – www.proventionconsortium.org
- Websites of NGOs working on livelihoods and food security issues

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

Type of secondary information	Why it is useful
Demographic profile , including the number of people in the area, the presence and number of refugees or internally displaced people (IDP).	Gives overall impression of how many people are potentially affected by food insecurity.
Maps with political/administrative boundaries; villages, cities and neighbourhoods; public transport systems including roads, rail networks, ports and bridges; rivers, reservoirs, and water and electricity points; market and industrial sites; residential areas and land put to other use.	Provides information on where people were/are, how to access them, potential obstacles, and under whose authority they fall.
Overview of the various social groups , by ethnicity, wealth and/or religion, specifying their physical location.	Provides information on how people are related socially and how to access them (e.g. through religious leaders or traditional elders).
Social and political structures/policies affecting food security , including those on production, rationing and subsidies; transport bans; fuel prices; restriction of movement; identification of groups prone to social discrimination by government/local authorities.	Offers some concept of the limitations and constraints affecting the population.
Maps of infrastructure services , including health facilities, schools, community and religious centres.	Provides information on social gathering points, and where to find key-informants.
Information on traditional/political power structures , including who makes the decisions at household, community and regional levels. Is the government's decision-making strongly decentralized?	Helps identify the most influential people in the community or region.
Livelihood profile/food economy zones , including information on how people make their living and what the main livelihood categories are (e.g. waged labour, agricultural production, livestock, trading).	Gives an impression of how people survive and their level of vulnerability as a result of the various crises.
Market analysis , including location, access and days of market activity. Prices (baseline, trends) of major food types and of cash crops – by region, season and availability. Location of wholesalers and major retailers; origin and sales points of different foods.	Provides information about normal and/or current market situation.
Nutritional status and seasonality : anthropometry (body measurements), micronutrient deficiencies; and food habits.	Gives an idea of the nutritional vulnerability of the population.
Disease patterns and seasonality , including prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, measles, diarrhoea, meningitis and chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.	Provides information on the timing and severity of major diseases, and identifies increased needs.
Previous emergencies and humanitarian aid/patterns of assistance : historical time-scale of previous emergencies and national response.	Provides information on past vulnerability (natural or political), possible recurrent weakening of food security, trends in aid provision, and lessons learned.
Existing disaster preparedness, response or contingency plans , including those of the government, National Society, NGOs, UN agencies and ICRC.	Gives an idea of capacity for response to the current crisis.
Overview of where and how other organizations are working in terms of food security, development and rehabilitation: the information they have on food security (especially NGOs, WFP, ICRC and social groups).	Identifies important local key-informants and organizations, and the assistance they have received in relation to food security.

Type of secondary information	Why it is useful
Security information , including hazards (such as flooding, industrial accidents and landmines), checkpoints, and areas prone to fighting, riots and recent security incidents.	Gives an idea of the security climate in the area.
Existing taboos such as those related to certain foods; discrimination , for instance against PLHIV; and strong cultural and religious beliefs .	Provides a better understanding of why people behave the way they do and how to approach them. Allows for analysis of the appropriateness of certain aid programmes.
Seasonal calendar of main labour opportunities ; local employment methods and customs, including labour migration patterns by region – and their underlying causes.	Provides information on livelihood patterns and main sources of income, showing possible lean periods.
Seasonal calendar of food production systems in rural areas, indicating when crops are planted and harvested, when land is weeded, and what other agricultural/livestock activities take place (see Annex 4).	Provides information on people's main agricultural/livestock activities at the time of assessment and an impression of the potential impact of the crisis or hazard on harvests.
Existing early warning systems for food security .	Gives an idea of the potential severity of the food security crisis.
Seasonal calendar of main weather patterns including rainfall, wind, and hot and cold spells (in normal years, trends).	Gives an indication of whether the current situation is abnormal, in particular concerning water availability for crops and animals.
Access to water under normal circumstances: for human consumption, for use by livestock, for irrigation purposes, and for sewage systems.	Provides information on how communities will be impacted by a crisis affecting their main water supply. Facilitates prediction of disease patterns.
Housing situation and access to services such as schools, health posts, garbage collection, and the provision of street lighting.	Provides information on housing conditions and on provision of basic services (by local governments, private companies, or the community).
Ownership of livelihood assets such as motor-bikes, craftsman's tools, fishing equipment, livestock and land. Are assets owned by only a few people or does everybody own a plot or herd?	Gives an overview of key assets and their distribution in the community.

This type of information will provide you with a first overall impression of the area, the community and the potential impact of the crisis. It should then be possible to identify the information that is still missing, and which you will need to obtain through primary data collection.

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

Step 3: Primary information collection

This step is crucial for determining the levels of food insecurity and vulnerability, and *you should collect the data yourself*. It is not a complicated process, but does require the use of various techniques. Each technique produces a different set of results and these, taken together with the information from secondary sources, will enable you to analyse the situation and draw conclusions.

Step 2 focused on gathering secondary information. Step 3 looks at the actual situation. A lot of information will be collected directly from the affected communities. This will be done through a combination of techniques using **observation**, **interviews** with individuals or groups, **measurements**, and **questionnaires** or **checklists**.

Tip

During a food security assessment, focus on how the current situation has *changed* compared with a period when everything was considered to be reasonably 'normal'.

Note that **questionnaires** require careful use. Drafting a good questionnaire involves a degree of technical expertise. For example, if questions are too focused, you may miss important information. One of the main aspects of an assessment is analysing community and household capacities to withstand problems: direct, inflexible questions will only provide part of the answer.

In addition, analysing and interpreting questionnaires is not a simple process, and requires training. Rather than using ready-made questionnaires, it would be better to use **checklists**. These will help you to direct your questions and prevent you from missing essential information (see Interview Checklist section).

An example of **measuring** is to estimate 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, and can be taken at anytime: following interviews or household visits, or by gathering whole groups of children and/or adults. 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 take MUAC measurements.

This guide focuses on the most important techniques for collecting primary information: **observation** and **interviews**.

How to collect information through observation

An enormous amount of information can be gathered through observation. Make careful observations before, during and after interviews. Things that you observe before the interview can be clarified during the interview process. Observations made following the interview can help in cross-checking what people have told you. Do not forget to make notes of these observations, even if you only scribble down some key words that will remind you later to write down your findings.

What information do you want to obtain through observation?	How
<p>General situation in and around the area, city or village What damage has been done by the hazard? Where are people living? What are their living conditions? Are they living in apartments, houses, community halls, sport arenas, religious buildings, huts, tents or under plastic sheeting?</p>	Walk and drive through the area.
<p>Condition of infrastructure What damage has occurred to roads, railways, telephone and electricity networks, water and sewage systems, factories, transport systems, wells, important buildings and irrigation systems? Are buildings in danger of further damage?</p>	
<p>Transport Is public transport still running? Are goods still coming into the area by truck, rail or air? Do you see trucks, trains or aircraft arriving or leaving? Are these carrying food? Are they empty or full?</p>	
<p>Presence of other aid agencies Do you see other organizations working in the area? What signs are there of their presence (e.g. official vehicles, staff, offices, logos, relief activities)?</p>	
<p>Security 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 streets? Can you see police, combatants or signs of weapons? Is there pillaging going on in shops? Have the local authorities cordoned off any areas (e.g. areas affected by bombing, landslides, volcanic eruptions, etc.)?</p>	

What information do you want to obtain through observation?	How
<p>Environment Is it hot or cold, rainy or dry? Is there a lot of garbage? Are people burning it? Is it being collected? Can you see any dead people or animals? Are people collecting the bodies? Can you see many fresh graves? Are there many flooded areas? Are street sewers overflowing? Is the water stagnant? Are the river beds flooded or very dry? In rural areas, can you see many insects, such as locusts? Are there many trees? Have many been cut down?</p>	<p>Walk and drive through areas and communities.</p>
<p>People's activities What are people doing? Are they working? If so, doing what and where? Are there many people doing nothing? Do many people appear to have left or are they staying near their homes? Can you see many ill or wounded people? Are many people queuing? What are they queuing for? Can you see many people on the move with their families and belongings? Do you see anything unusual?</p>	<p>Walk through communities including smaller streets, as well as major roads.</p>
<p>People's condition How do people look physically? Do they seem malnourished, dirty, wounded or ill? Are people's clothes in good condition? Are people stressed, aggressive or afraid? What is the relative number of men, women and children?</p>	
<p>Conditions in people's homes and presence of family members Are people preparing food? What kind of food? Can you see street vendors? Where do people eat – at home, with relatives or in welfare centres? Are there power cuts and water shortages that may affect food hygiene? How are they preparing food? What fuel are they using? Can you see food and fuel stores? What kind of assets to 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>	<p>Visit homes and property around homes.</p>
<p>Condition of specific food security-related areas What is the condition of mills, marketplaces and shops? What is being sold on the market? Is there scarcity? Are people buying? Is there any evidence of stockpiling or looting? Can you see any evidence of a black market?</p>	<p>Walk through area and observe fields from car before and after visit to an area.</p>
<p>Condition of livestock and crops (in rural areas) 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? Do they appear healthy or underfed?</p>	

Not all of the observations you make will be linked to the current crisis. Some conditions may have prevailed for many years, or your observations may simply reflect the timing of your visit. For example, if you visit a specific neighbourhood at a time of day when there is no market, then people, food and transport might be less visible. In other instances, your visit may coincide with the pre-harvest 'hunger gap', when food stores are traditionally low; you will need to determine if the situation is more or less severe than in previous years. Interviews will enable you to verify your observations and determine people's actual level of vulnerability and food insecurity, how long this situation has prevailed and what its causes are.

How to collect information through interviews

Definition

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews can take place with individuals or in groups. Participants will often have been specifically selected. If possible, interviews should take place away from other people, in order to minimize distractions and ensure that people feel free to talk. A checklist of key issues or open-ended questions is prepared in advance and serves as an aid during the interview. This acts as a tool to structure the discussion and to encourage people to say what they think on certain topics. The interviewer will also need to motivate people to bring up things *they* want to talk about. The style of the interview is conversational.

What are interviews?

Interviews carried out as part of an assessment involve having meetings and discussions with people. You should hold a number of interviews with different people, in order to obtain as complete a picture of the situation as possible. Most often, these will be **semi-structured interviews**. This means that you will have prepared some of the questions and subjects in advance. You will have a checklist of topics you wish to discuss, which will enable you to pose all of the questions you think are relevant and ensure that you do not forget any important issues. Questions should be open-ended. This means that people can give you any answer they wish, rather than having to

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 focus groups (i.e. participants are different) include people from a variety of backgrounds, so as to gain diverse perspectives. This is useful when you need to get a broad overview of the situation in a short period of time.

One or more heterogeneous focus group sessions are usually held at the beginning of the field assessment. This helps in understanding the overall situation and the structure of the community. Based on this information, you can then decide which types of *homogeneous* groups you will want to interview.

For example, you may gather a number of people together immediately after you arrive in an area. The group could include the community leader and others who happen to be present. This is useful for obtaining a first impression of the problems. You will then need to determine, with the help of the initial group, the number and nature of different groups in the area (covering key areas of livelihood, religion and/or ethnicity).

Homogeneous focus groups (i.e. participants are similar) involve people from similar backgrounds.

For example, they will include people from the same livelihood group or a group of women.

Homogeneous groups are used to investigate an issue in detail, from the perspective of a particular group.

For example, you may invite a group of women to discuss food habits, agriculture and nutritional issues. Other examples include groups involving cash crop farmers, daily wage labourers or miners to discuss their specific way of making a living. Yet another example is that of a group of displaced people to discuss what has happened to them and how they obtain food.

In urban settings, you will likely require assistance from administrative authorities or welfare associations in organizing a focus group. For example, you can ask a group of factory workers to discuss where they buy their food; or ask to speak to families housed in a local school following flooding in their neighbourhood to discuss how they are using their assets in dealing with the new situation.

choose from a set list of answers. Since you will not be using a standard form for their answers, you will have to write down what they say.

Who should you interview?

Interview different people in different settings. Each time, have a different objective and focus for your discussion. The three main approaches are:

- **community focus groups**,
- **household** interviews, and
- **key-informant** interviews.

Note

Identifying a community leader is usually time-consuming. You will need to approach local authority representatives, who may only be available during official working hours. Try to obtain mobile phone numbers and establish initial phone contacts to arrange meetings.

Also be aware that the **place** and **time** of the meeting are important. Community focus groups should occur in neutral places, where those participating will feel comfortable. In urban settings, it is best to negotiate the use of a public administration facility, rather than a private home. Arrange a time when most of the people you want to interview are available.

Households

Household interviews involve a group of family members who can provide information on their **household food economy**: how they make a living, their coping mechanisms, the number of dependent family members, and their food consumption pattern.

For example, this may include:

- households in which the main wage earner has lost his or her job due to an economic crisis;
- households containing people affected by HIV/AIDS;
- households affected by severe drought;
- displaced family members, who have lost all of their assets due to a flood or hurricane; or
- nomadic households.

Key-informants

Key-informants are people with **specific knowledge** about certain aspects of the community. They can help in collecting information rapidly and in a focused way. Generally, you will interview them individually, although at times you may interview two or three of them at once.

Examples include:

- traders (food, livestock, seeds);
- market people (buyers, sellers);
- school teachers;
- religious leaders;
- health personnel (clinicians, veterinary personnel);
- community workers;
- tourism industry workers;
- home visitors;
- local government officials;
- military personnel/militia leaders;
- millers; and
- National Society branch members, as well as NGO, UN and ICRC staff.

Key-informants are people who are able to offer an interesting and significant perspective on the crisis.

There are no guidelines for identifying such people. It could be anyone: an elderly woman who has lived through past crises and is thus able to provide comparisons; or an older child, a patient, a widow, a migrant worker.

Definition

Focus group

This refers to 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 any disparities in 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 directly or indirectly related to the 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 a single individual.

During a food security assessment, you should ideally carry out at least one heterogeneous focus group session. Based on this, you can identify which homogenous groups you need to interview: this will often include one homogenous group for each main area of livelihood activity, as well as a focus group consisting only of women.

In addition, you should aim to interview at least two key-informants, and conduct a minimum of two household visits for details of household food economy in the area.

The household visits will also allow you to make observations and cross-check or clarify findings obtained during the focus group discussions. It is therefore a good idea to undertake household interviews *after* the focus group discussions.

In urban settings, you may find that people are often not at home. Ask their neighbours for information and, if necessary, come back at meal times, when families generally return home.

Each type of interview has a unique set of objectives and therefore cannot be substituted for another type. For example, a focus group interview cannot replace a household interview, and vice versa.

Ideally, all three kinds of interview should be included in your food security assessment. However, if you are facing extreme time or security constraints, make sure you

have carried out *at least two focus group discussions*, and have visited two or three households, even if only briefly. If for one reason or another you cannot gather people together for focus group discussions, you might wish to substitute these for 10 to 20 household visits. In this way, you will obtain information that is representative of a geographical area, livelihood sector or ethnic group. In such instances, you should randomly choose the households you visit (see page 33).

However, key-informant interviews are essential and should never be omitted. Nevertheless, you may need to be flexible. For instance, you might be able to find key-informants outside the immediate geographical area of interest.

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 interpreter

From time to time, you might require the services of a local interpreter. A good interpreter translates your questions as exactly as possible and does not try to convey his or her own opinion. Always take time before the interview to discuss the techniques you will be using and the general topic of discussion. Ask for a literal translation, rather than personal interpretation. Tell your interpreter that you would like to hear his/her impressions afterwards, but that during the interview you want to hear the viewpoint of the people being interviewed. Wherever possible, try to work with the same interpreter throughout. A good interpreter is a partner, who knows how to manage a group properly and can help you out if you ask an inappropriate question. The best ones will quickly grasp the purpose and logic of the interview and, with practice, should be able to conduct interviews on their own. If an interpreter is unsatisfactory, find someone more suitable – it is impossible to conduct good work with inadequate interpretation.

(Adapted from Reference 7)

How to select the people you want to interview

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.

Selecting a focus group

Selecting the people you want to interview depends on the information you need. Firstly, you will want some *general information* directly or indirectly related to food security. For this, the best option is a heterogeneous focus group, with people of different backgrounds and opinions. There are two ways to do this: either you select the people for the group, or you initiate a focus group with the first group of people you meet upon arrival in the area. This is easier to do in rural settings. In urban areas, be prepared to spend more time getting your group together, as city dwellers engage in very diverse

activities which may keep them away from home for most of the day. It is often a good idea to set aside one day to visit the different neighbourhoods and establish contacts, and then return on another day to conduct the actual interviews.

You select the people for the focus group. For example, you may decide to include local health workers, farmers, government administrators, traders and teachers. In order to do this, you can either ask community leaders to nominate individuals, or you select them yourself at random. Wherever appropriate, ensure a good balance of men and women.

You initiate a focus group with the first group of people you meet upon arrival in the area. For example, you come across a number of people gathered in one place, and ask them to participate in an interview. Before you do this, it is still best to see whether there is a community leader or some other person of authority present, and request their permission and involvement.

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

Selecting households

Following a few focus group discussions, you will then want to walk through the area or neighbourhood to observe the situation and cross-check the information obtained in focus groups. This is also a good moment to do some household visits, with or without a more detailed interview.

Select households randomly and make sure that they are not all clustered next to each other (see box). Sometimes, participants from the focus group will want to show you around and invite you to their homes. After this visit, you can select another home and visit this household as well.

Tip

How to determine which households to visit

Depending on the time available, carry out interviews in at least two or three households in each sub-community. If possible, stand in the centre of the sub-community or neighbourhood, throw your pen into the air and once it lands, walk in the direction it is pointing. Continue walking until you reach the edge of the sub-community or neighbourhood, counting the number of houses or apartment blocks 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 houses 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 direction indicated by the pen, counting up to the ninth house on your route. This is the first house that you will visit. After this, 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.

When faced with apartment blocks, determine your choice by first choosing an apartment block at random, then a floor at random, counting the flats on that floor, and then choosing one randomly using the same method as described above.

The reason for random selection is to ensure that information does not come only from influential, dominant individuals (who may be wealthier than the average or may want you to see only the poorest households), but is representative of the community as a whole.

Selecting key-informants

Based on the information you need to obtain, it will be easy to determine which key-informants you want to select. Local people can help in identifying and finding them. Do not forget that on the way to or from an area, it might be worth stopping for a few minutes to speak with various people to get their perspective on the food security situation (for example a street vendor, a traffic warden, a car mechanic, a herder, some women collecting firewood, a migrant or a truck driver).

How to conduct an interview

Interviews with focus groups, household members or key-informants differ mainly in the *kind of information* you obtain. The interview discussion method is slightly different for focus groups, because you are dealing with a number of people at the same time, all of whom may want to have their say. It is important that you guide the group by introducing topics for discussion and that you help the group participate in a lively and natural discussion. The suggestions on the following page deal specifically with focus group discussions, although they can also apply to interviews with households and key-informants. For additional guidance on how to conduct assessment interviews, consult the *International Federation Guidelines for Emergency Assessment*.

Interviews with households require careful attention to matters related to 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 household items, their condition, and what seems to be missing. Ask general questions about people's lives, diet and livelihoods, and any changes that are taking place. Ask specific questions about the things you see around you: (e.g. "what is that vegetable? when do you eat it?"). If you see packaging from humanitarian aid organizations, ask what they have received, when, why, how much and from whom. Food may not be visible in the home if it is stored in small quantities in kitchen cupboards. Enquire about foods bought locally and foods purchased further away from home or brought in from other cities. Find out about specific brands of foods and local preferences.

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. However, remember to take into account their personal interests, and the influence their information might have. Balance this 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 provide information in their own areas of expertise. This means that your interviews with them should focus on those areas.

Guidelines for focus group interviews during food security assessments

- **Prepare well** for interviews. Be clear about the information that you want to get from each interview.
- **Start** the interview with some **general questions** about life in the community, or the recent incident or disaster. Set an informal tone; you want people to be relaxed, this is not a police investigation!
- Gradually **direct 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. Concentrating on problems may give the impression that your objective is to find out “what the National Society can give”. This encourages people to present ‘shopping lists’ of material requirements. Do not forget that one of your main objectives is to understand the food security situation.
- In discussing sensitive topics (e.g. sources of income; coping mechanisms that might include 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?”; or “what do tourism industry workers do now that hotels have shut down?” rather than “what do you do now that you cannot work in the hotel?”
- Try **to involve everyone** in the discussion. This might not always be possible. For example, there might be a strong hierarchy or social order in the group, or a mix of shy and dominant personalities. You should make an effort to create 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 they wish. Actively encourage ‘less powerful’ participants and emphasize the constructive nature of the discussion. Try to understand their problems and stress that you are not looking for anyone to blame.
- Whenever you need **an interpreter for a local language** (this can be a colleague from the National Society or somebody from the local community) be careful that they accurately translate what you or the group says and not what they think. It is best to ‘check’ on this by asking different questions on the same issue during the interview.
- **Ask people to bring food items** (including raw or packaged foods) with which you are not familiar and ask them to explain to you how they prepare them.
- Remain **open** and professionally **inquisitive** during the interview. Do not assume too much, look out for the unexpected and have a healthy scepticism 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 aid. Listen to what is said and cross-check against other interviews and with your observations.

Tip

Some things to do during interviews:

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

Tip

Some things not to do during 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; address everything to the whole group.
- Don't create expectations.
- Don't interrupt when someone is speaking 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 own pre-conceived 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 about how people are living and eating, how they make their living, how they obtain food and whether they grow any of their own food or have relatives in the countryside who do so. Ask what activities they undertake. Some information is more easily obtained through focus group discussions, while other information can be better gathered through household or key-informant interviews. The table below provides suggestions, but each food security assessment situation is different and you may decide 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?
Composition of community (demographic profile)	■	■	■	Checklist questions, mapping
History and sequence of events	■	■	■	Checklist questions, timeline
How people make their living	■	■	■	Checklist questions
Income	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
Expenditure	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
How do people obtain their food	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
Food consumption patterns	■	■	■	Checklist questions, proportional piling
Market prices and evolution	■	■	■	Checklist questions, table/figure
Labour (for wages or food)	■	■	■	Checklist questions
Agriculture, such as crop performance and harvest estimates	■	■	■	Checklist questions, year ranking, seasonal calendar
Livestock, such as herd size, water availability and disease	■	■	■	Checklist questions, year ranking, seasonal calendar
Perception of main problems	■	■	■	Pair-wise ranking
General issues, including health and water	■	■	■	Checklist questions, mapping
Infrastructure, including transport, housing and school	■	■	■	Checklist questions, mapping
Daily activity pattern	■	■	■	Checklist questions, activity profile
Security	■	■	■	Checklist questions
Miscellaneous	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

The following section provides examples of checklist questions for each subject. You might already have obtained some of the information through secondary information collection (Step 2) or through direct observation (Step 3).

Interview checklist: what to ask

The following checklist with pre-prepared questions helps you to guide the interview towards what you want to know. The sample questions are examples only, and the way in which you ask them is flexible.

The list is not exhaustive and these questions should *not* be used as a questionnaire. You might decide to skip certain questions, since each food security assessment is different. This will depend on your objective and the context. For example, the relevance of discussing livestock ownership or the use of a bank account is not the same in every context. Feel free to select those questions most relevant to your own situation, and to change their sequence.

During the food security assessment, focus on how the situation *has changed* or *could change*. Try to get information on a *normal year* (an average year that is neither good nor bad). Compare this with the current situation.

Composition of community (demographic profile)

- Is this a rural, urban or peri-urban community? Are the people residents of this area, and if so since when? Are there refugees or displaced people? Have people moved out – if so, when and why? What makes people stay here?
- How many households are there? What is their composition (for example, numbers of children, women and elderly people)?
- Has anything changed recently concerning the movement of people? Why? Are certain household members leaving? Why and where are they going?
- What are the ethnic or tribal groups? What languages are spoken here? Have there been any recent changes in this? Why?
- Do men live in the community year-round? If not, why do they move? Do other members of the household migrate for labour, for example to work as domestic help in bigger cities?

Do some **mapping**, if possible (see Annex 3).

History and sequence of events

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

Make a **timeline**, if possible (see Annex 7).

How people make their living

- 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).
- In general and in normal years: What are the major activities? What types of income opportunities exist and what skills are required to get employment? Are people self-employed, employed or a mixture of both? Do men and women work in different sectors? What work is available, paid for either in cash or in kind?
- Have people received aid in recent years, why and how?
- How has any or all of this changed? How might it change in future (in the case of a disaster preparedness assessment)?

Income

- What are the main sources of income on average in a normal year (per livelihood group or per community)? Does this change over the year, and if so, 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 own produce (food crops; cash crops; livestock and related output, such as dairy products).
- labour (factory worker, gardener, public administrator, entertainer, farmer, construction worker);
- trade (wholesale, retail, transport, resale of goods);
- craftwork (mats, baskets, pots);
- social welfare, gifts, zakat (gifts normally offered in Islamic communities); and
- other production, collection and sale (recycled metal, wild foods, firewood, charcoal, grass).

Do a **proportional piling**, if possible (see Annex 5).

Expenditures

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

Examples of expenditure categories:

- food (specify);
- fuel (electricity, gas, firewood, charcoal, kerosene);
- household items (soap, clothes);
- transport fees;
- drinking water (for people or animals);
- school and university fees;
- gifts or zakat;
- taxes, repayment of debts;
- housing (rent);
- investment (workshop materials, motorbike, livestock purchase or re-stocking);
- health (medical consultation, drugs for people or animals); and
- miscellaneous (electricity bills, rent for land, seeds, fertilizers, tools, entertainment, alcohol).

Do a **proportional piling**, if possible (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, and if so how? Has this recently changed, why and how?

Examples of food source categories:

- own production on farmland or home gardens (crops; livestock and their products, such as milk or meat);
- purchase in local shops and markets;
- exchange for labour or food-for-work;
- gifts of food;
- food stamps, welfare vouchers or food aid;
- barter (exchanging one product for another);
- loans;
- stocks;
- food at work or at school; and,
- fishing, hunting, wild food gathering (such as mushrooms, leaves, berries or shoots).

Do a **proportional piling**, if possible (see Annex 5).

Food consumption patterns

- What is the average family diet in a normal year? Who is responsible for meeting food needs? What is the number of daily meals? Who prepares these and how?
- Where does the food come from (production, market, exchange, donation, community 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 if this occurs? Do they normally collect wild foods, and if so, what kind?
- Has there been any change recently in people's diets; what, why, and since when?
- What do people do to avoid food shortage in the family? What replacement foods are available to save money?
- How many meals are eaten away from the home – at school or at work?
- Do snacks form part of the diet?

Do a **proportional piling**, if possible (see Annex 5).

Market prices and evolution

- Ask about prices of important non-food and food commodities (bread, meat, cash crops, food crops, as well as sugar, salt, vegetables)? What were the prices of these commodities one year ago? 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 access to the market? What are the main market days? Have there been any changes in people's patterns of selling or buying? Why? Ask the same questions about livestock, milk 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).

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?

Agriculture (more specific)

- What is the harvest in a normal year? What will it be this year? What percentage of crops have been planted (now and in a normal year)? How is crop performance? What agricultural problems do people face? Is this exceptional, and if so, why?
- How much should the harvest be to ensure a minimum income?
- What is the quality of seeds, tools and fertilizers? Who owns the tools? Has anything changed recently in this respect?

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

Livestock (more specific)

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

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

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, how, and why did it change? Will these problems become worse? Why?
- What did people do in the past to overcome such problems? What are they doing now?

Do a **pair-wise ranking**, if possible (see Annex 6)

General issues, including health, fuel and water

- Where does cooking and heating fuel come from? Is it difficult to obtain? Are people able to pay their electricity bills? Have there been any recent changes in this situation?
- Where does water for drinking, cooking and washing come from? Are supplies regular or are there seasonal variations in availability and price? Who collects water, and what is the quality of the drinking water? Where do people collect water? Is there enough? Is it far? Is it safe to go there?
- Are there any seasonal patterns of disease? What are the symptoms? How are diseases known locally? Has there been a change in this pattern? If so, how and why? Have there been any major outbreaks of disease?
- Where are the functioning health centres located? Do people attend them? If not, why not?
- Do people need to pay for drugs or for medical consultations? How much? Have there been any changes in this?

Do some **mapping**, if possible (see Annex 3).

Infrastructure, including transport, housing and schools

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

Do some **mapping**, if possible (see Annex 3).

Daily activity pattern

- What are the daily activities for men, women and children, on an average day? Has this changed recently? How and why?
- Do children attend school? If not, why not?

Make an **activity profile**, if possible (see Annex 8).

Security

- Does the community feel safe here? If not, why not? Have there been any recent changes?
- Is looting a major problem? Which groups suffer from it most?
- Are there internal conflicts?

Miscellaneous

- Have any other organizations visited the community to do an assessment? If so, which organizations, and when? Did they provide aid?
- Will people migrate if the situation does not change or if it becomes worse? Where to?
- Ask any 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 get their impressions. You can do this with your interpreter or with colleagues who are doing interviews with different people. If you come across contradictions, try to verify the information by asking 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 will need to analyse your findings. Before you begin the analysis, you should:

- re-read all your notes. Compare areas and/or communities, and prioritize those problems you think are most important; and
- hold a team meeting to discuss everyone's impressions and findings, and to compare areas, neighbourhoods and/or communities.

At this stage, the most crucial consideration is whether or not you have managed to answer the questions, as set out by the objectives of your food security assessment. Do you *understand* the food security situation and do people *need* assistance from the National Society? If so, *what kind* of assistance?

Below, you will find a list of key questions you should now be able to answer with the information collected from primary and secondary sources. You do not have to go into excessive detail in answering each question.

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? During an average year, what were their sources of food and income? Can you provide a percentage for each source?
- How did these different sources of food and income vary between seasons in a normal year? Can you construct a representative seasonal calendar for each livelihood group?
- Looking back over the past five to ten 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)?
- Which livelihood group appears to be the most food insecure and which ones are at risk of becoming food insecure?
- 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 managing household cash?
- How active is the market for food, as seen in local shops or the marketplace? How easy is access to these food outlets? Consider distance, security, means and cost of transport.
- 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 the 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 institutional food provided at schools or at work? Are wild foods part of the normal diet and if so, to what extent? What cheaper replacement foods are available to people? What are seen as luxury foods, for use only on special occasions?

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?

Tip

Be careful with generalizations:

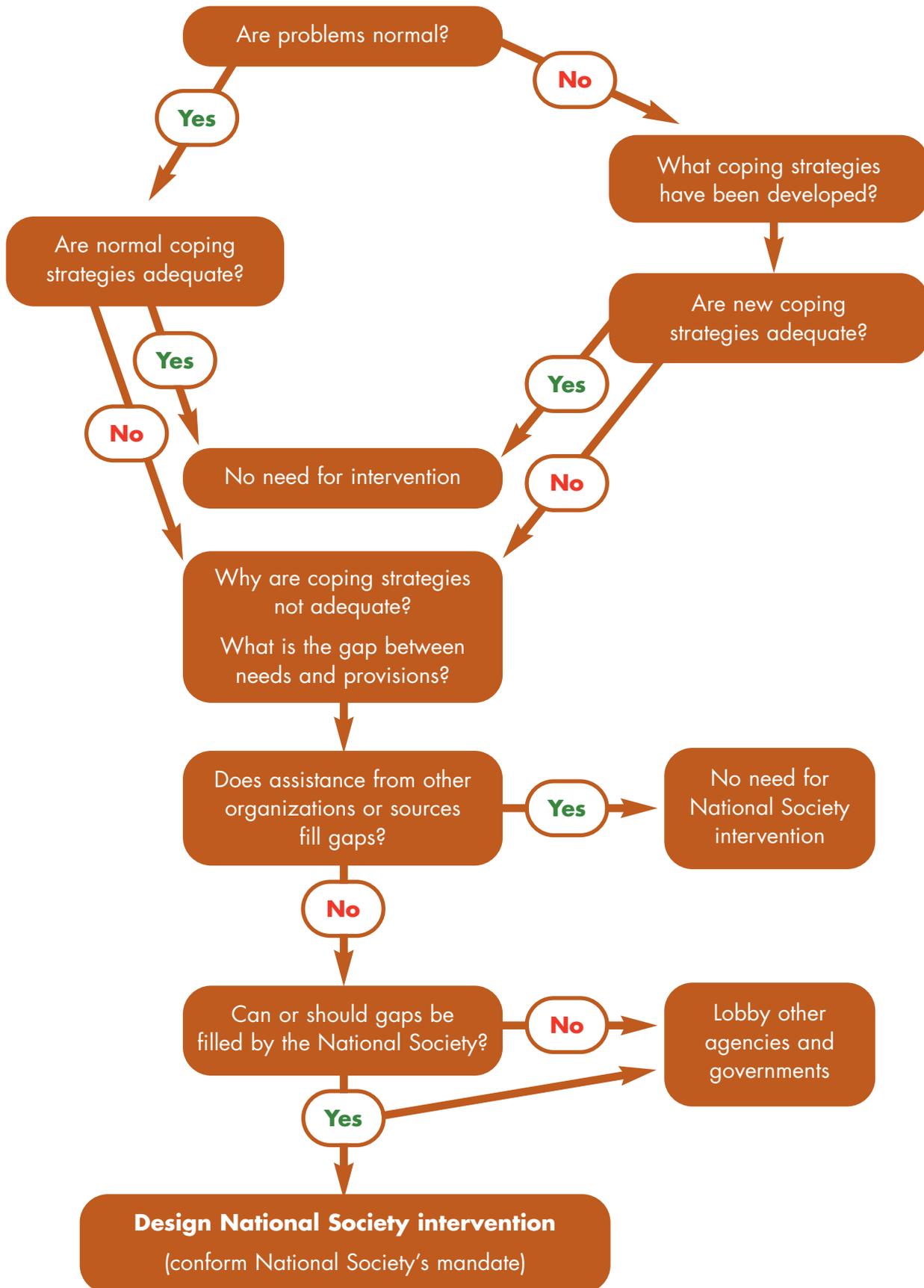
- if the areas you assessed were very heterogeneous in terms of livelihood strategies, ethnicity, demographics; or
- if you had many constraints in visiting areas (for political reasons, or problems of physical access).

- How has it affected access to shops and 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 have coping strategies changed compared to the pre-crisis situation?
- Which group or population is most affected? Which group appears to be most at risk? How are they coping?
- How has the food consumption pattern changed? For whom has it changed most? Can you give percentages for each source? Are cheaper replacement foods available? Is there any evidence of food stockpiling or of a black market economy for food?
- Are there major changes in '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 using these coping strategies? Do you think people will move temporarily to another neighbourhood or migrate altogether, and if so, where to?
- 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 the coping strategies?
- Can you describe the current situation regarding people's health, the quality and quantity of water, and housing?
- If malnutrition is a big problem, can you identify the causes specific to this situation? Are people who have specific nutritional requirements able to obtain the foods they need?
- Can you describe the current infrastructure, and provide a map marking inhabited areas (possibly indicating clinics, schools and other significant points), rivers, roads and railroads?
- 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 do most live together?
- What are the five biggest problems for each community in normal years, and now?

You should now be able to draw conclusions about food **availability** and **access** within the community, and its **utilization** at household level, indicating how this has changed over time and why.

You should also be able to identify potential **vulnerable groups** with regard to food insecurity and distinguish those currently food insecure and at nutritional risk from those at risk of becoming food insecure.

Having answered most of the questions set out above, you will now wish to ascertain whether or not your National Society needs to provide assistance to the communities and if so, what kind of assistance. The following diagram provides guidance in this regard.



If you conclude that National Society assistance is needed, you should then come up with different options for providing such assistance, and include arguments in favour of and against each one. You also need to specify the volume and duration of assistance being recommended (for additional guidelines on planning assistance, see the International Federation’s *Project Planning Process* handbook).

6 How to compile a food security assessment report

Your food security assessment report should include the following components, in this order:

Executive summary

A very short description (maximum two to three pages) of the food security assessment, covering the main findings. Normally you will write this once you have finished the whole report.

List of contents

- List of the main sections of the report, with corresponding page numbers.

Introduction

- Reason this food security assessment was carried out.
- Objectives of the assessment.

Background

- Brief description of the context, pre-crisis and crisis situations.

Methodology

- Timeframe of the assessment;
- Number of assessors and their areas of expertise;
- Selection criteria for the sites;
- How *secondary* information was collected and from which sources;
- How *primary* information was collected:
 - Selection of key-informants
 - Composition of focus or other discussion groups
 - Criteria for selecting informants
 - Techniques used.

Results

- Practical constraints on the assessment;
- Description of the assessment's scope, including its geographic spread, the range of livelihood groups included, and other characteristics of the population (gender, ethnicity or tribal groups, presence of displaced people or refugees, etc.);
- Results should cover most questions as per the Analysis Section (Step 4), 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 security, health, water and infrastructure. Make sure you try to *summarize* as much as possible (e.g. if findings from certain sites are similar, group them together). Describe particularly vulnerable livelihood groups and any others who are vulnerable to food insecurity in the present situation. Make comparisons between communities. Also mention any possible causes of malnutrition, if that emerges as a major problem.

Conclusions

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

Recommendations

- Suggestions regarding possible interventions. Specify the means of implementation and consider the need for advocacy. Include clear justifications for these suggestions. If you recommend assistance on the part of the National Society, describe its purpose and duration. If possible, describe the advantages and disadvantages of each suggested intervention, and list any potential constraints. Outline the kinds of assistance you think should be provided in the short and long term, explain why, and specify financial requirements and general strategy.
- Suggestions for any additional assessments you feel may be required: specify the areas and priority topics to be covered by such additional assessments.

Annexes

- Maps of the area.
- Time schedule of assessment activities and areas visited.
- Secondary and primary information sources. List the documents used and people interviewed (not necessarily everyone's name, but rather their function or role, and which aspect of the community they represent). For example, list representatives of government ministries, traditional leaders and representatives of key organizations (NGOs, UN, ICRC, women's groups).
- Assessment tools and checklists.
- Description of each assessment in each community (from your notes). If you visited ten different communities and held focus group discussions, household visits and key-informant interviews in each, then write your comments under the section for each community. Incorporate all of your findings, including results from proportional piling, seasonal calendar and year rankings. Your annexes should thus contain ten different sections, one for each community.
- Photos if they are relevant. If you have photos that illustrate the consequences of the crisis, you should consider including them in your report.



CONSERVATION FARMING



MOKHATLO OA SEFAPANO SE SEFUBELU LESOTHO O QALILE TEMO EA LIKOTI SETEREKENG SA BERA KA HO NTSETSA PELE LEANO LA NETEFATSO EA BOTENG BA LIJO

BASEBETSI MOKHATLO NETEFATSO EA BOTENG BA LIJO KA KOPANELO



BAKENG SA LITZHAQISETSA KOPANA LE BA MOKHATLO OA SEFAPANO SE SEFUBELU BERA C.T.Y.

7 How to choose an appropriate food security intervention

Food security interventions must be designed according to two main criteria:

- the needs of the affected population;
- the experience and capacity of the National Society.

The assessment should allow you to understand the severity and underlying causes of the food security situation. This forms the basis for decision-making regarding what intervention or combination of interventions are most appropriate to the situation (see page 18).

Your assessment should have enabled you to identify groups of people who make their living in various ways and are therefore affected differently by the adverse situation. In situations of severe food insecurity, lives may be at risk if groups of people are unable to meet their basic food needs. It is important to distinguish between people who require direct food assistance from those who require broader food security interventions, such as livelihood support.

Tip Remember that the principle of response programmes is *to save lives, protect or restore livelihoods, and to reduce vulnerability in the community*. More specifically, food security programming aims *to improve the availability of, access to and utilization of food*.

Food assistance

This refers to the provision of food in the right quantities and of the right quality, so as to allow people to meet their food needs during a period of crisis, and to avert illness and death. Food assistance should be appropriately targeted: this requires differentiating between livelihood groups, geographical areas and sectors of the community, in order to determine those who may be at a higher nutritional risk.

In cases where food assistance programmes are already underway, your assessment may uncover groups that have been missed, or new groups that have become food insecure due to deterioration in the situation.

The provision of food is a short-term measure aimed at saving lives. Results are measured through reduced mortality rates and improved nutritional status. Food assistance programmes are often most successful when other basic needs – such as water, shelter, medical care and protection – are met as well.

If food assistance is needed, the assessment should enable you to determine:

Who needs food assistance	Have you identified new groups of people at nutritional risk or left out of existing food assistance programmes?
How long for	Is the food assistance expected to help people over a lean period of up to three months until the end of the crisis, or is it a more

	chronic situation which prevents people from supporting themselves (e.g. leading to permanent migration)?
What type of food is most appropriate	Have you ensured that nutritional, cultural, financial and logistical considerations are met in designing the appropriate food ration to be used?
What distribution mechanism will work best	Should food be given for free or in exchange for work? Are dry take-home rations or soup kitchens more appropriate for the food insecure population (depending on access to cooking facilities, as well as specific needs related to shelter)?
How will impact be monitored	Are you saving lives or protecting livelihoods to avoid asset depletion due to food shortages? Your objective will determine how to monitor the impact.

Provision of food assistance is usually only a partial answer for groups of people who have little choice other than to depend on external assistance.

Various food assistance scenarios include:

- Temporary displacement (two weeks to two months)
For example, during flooding or after a volcanic eruption: families will seek shelter in safer neighbouring areas for a few weeks, until the water subsides or the ash cools down. Food assistance can tide them over during this period of displacement, as well as during the initial weeks upon returning to their homes.
- Prolonged displacement (more than six months)
For example, refugees who cross a border and settle in makeshift or official camps over a period of months, or people displaced by a tsunami that has destroyed their village. Food assistance can help them while they look for a new livelihood.
- Long term effects of an economic crisis (over 12 months)
For example, economic upheaval and conflict leading to changed livelihood patterns, which may leave part of the community permanently vulnerable to food insecurity: people may be unable to support themselves because they have lost their old way of life. In this case, food assistance becomes welfare provision, and it is often difficult to find an exit strategy. It is important not to replace the role of the government in such situations.

In addition, food assistance can be used as part of *home based care* in communities highly affected by HIV/AIDS. Support in the form of nutritious food rations for PLHIV and their families helps to improve the quality of life and daily functioning of PLHIV. Intake of nutritious food helps boost the immune system which in turn can slow the progression of HIV into AIDS. Sufficient food intake is also needed to make anti-retroviral therapy effective. Without regular access to food, there is a high risk of PLHIV not continuing with anti-retroviral therapy, due to the discomfort caused by ingesting these drugs on an empty stomach.

The most common examples of food security interventions are *'free food distributions'* and *'food for work'* programmes. *Free food distributions* involve giving out food rations to the whole population or to a target group. *Food for work* is an income transfer, where food is offered as payment for physical work over a period of time. This involves identifying projects near the affected community (e.g. road repair, rubble clearance, dyke building, tree planting) which benefit the community as a whole and provide employment to those who may have no other available source of income. An alternative to 'food for work' is 'cash for work', where people are paid cash in return for working on community projects.

When considering food assistance, ask yourself:

- How does it contribute to food availability?
- How does it contribute to food access?
- How does it contribute to food utilization?

This will help you decide whether a food assistance programme is needed, and whether this is the best way for households to obtain food in the short-term, while other longer-term solutions are sought.

Be aware that while food assistance can be of benefit to those at nutritional risk, it may act as a disincentive to local food production – for example, if it drives food prices down, or if it causes inflation in local markets when beneficiaries trade their food for other commodities.

Tip

Identify the most suitable exit strategy and complementary food security interventions, which will promote and restore - rather than disrupt - the normal food security systems in the area.

Other food security interventions

There are many other interventions (listed on page 19) that can help reduce vulnerability to food insecurity (many of which are non-food related). Interventions only indirectly related to food provision, which nevertheless serve to increase food availability, include: terracing fields, building dams, constructing fish ponds, developing irrigation, planting fruit trees, etc.

The food security intervention most appropriate to a particular situation will depend on such factors as the timing of the assessment and possible 'delay' in responding, the severity of the situation, and the capacity of the National Society. For example, there are a number of possible responses aimed at improving food access after a hurricane in peri-urban communities. These could include: road improvement projects and loans for transport vehicles, as means of supporting local traders' ability to supply markets with food at affordable prices; or alternatively, the provision of grants to households for investment in home production of chickens, rabbits and vegetables.

Ask yourself whether the food security response should focus on⁴:

- **disaster preparedness, as a precautionary intervention to prevent food insecurity,**
- **disaster relief, as a response intervention to ensure that immediate food security needs are met,**
- **disaster recovery, or**
- **vulnerability reduction, as a broader intervention to enhance and invest in food security.**

Practically, this implies that programmes aim to support:

- **primary production of food;**
- **income-generation or employment;**
- **access to markets;**
- **development, protection or recovery of assets.**

(Adapted from Reference 8)

Look through the following list of food security interventions and try to identify how each one can contribute in addressing the main causes of food insecurity and vulnerability for the different livelihood groups, as brought to light by your assessment.

⁴ See the diagram on page 16 on how assessment objectives are related to timing.

Main initiative to reduce food security (more detail on p. 19)	save lives		restore/ protect livelihoods		
	Provide food	Food production	Income-generation and employment	Access to markets	Asset development, protection or recovery
Food aid	X				X
Food-for-work	X		X	X	X
Cash-for-work			X	X	X
Food or cash vouchers	X			X	
Distribution of seeds, tools and fertilisers		X			X
Distribution of fishing or hunting equipment		X			X
Livestock interventions		X			X
Start-up business loans or grants			X		
Training and skills development			X		X
Cash distribution			X	X	
Microfinance projects			X		X
Small irrigation and water projects		X	X		X

Note

The more diversified a household's income sources, the more food secure they are likely to be. When considering food security interventions, try to enhance the income-earning opportunities available to the household, rather than replacing existing ones.

To decide which intervention will work best, consider how it will affect food availability, access and utilization on the part of your target group, as well as of co-existing livelihood groups.

Tip**Food or cash**

Programme decisions on whether to provide cash or food as an income transfer should consider whether food insecurity is chiefly a result of limited food availability or limited access to food (poor purchasing power). If food is not available cash provisions might not be appropriate. For more practical guidance on cash/voucher programming, see References 9 and 12.

National Society capacity

Once you have established the main objectives for response, based on the information collected and your analysis of the situation, you can then develop an appropriate programme which focuses on those who are food insecure and takes into account the severity of the situation (see point 2, page 17).

As a final step, you will need to consider the capacity and experience of the National Society.

The problem tree on page 43 allows you to determine the most appropriate role for the National Society: (a) to respond fully; (b) to fill a gap; or (c) to lobby others to intervene.

Ask yourself:

- Has the National Society undertaken similar programmes in this area before?
- Has the Red Cross Red Crescent undertaken similar programmes elsewhere?
- Should technical expertise for the programme be accessed locally or externally?
- Can programmes be monitored throughout their duration?
- Are other agencies better placed than the National Society to intervene, or can they be asked to work jointly with the National Society?
- Where is funding for the programme most likely to come from?
- What is likely to happen if the National Society does not intervene?

Decisions should be based on discussions with your team, supplemented by feedback from key-informants contacted during your assessment. Be prepared to spend at least one day discussing options and investigating questions of timing, targeting and costing. It is also useful to consider how a *combination of interventions* may work together to increase food security.

For example, after an urban landslide due to torrential rain, displaced families may require food assistance for four weeks, and employment opportunities to clear rubble and reconstruct homes through 'cash-for-work' programmes for up to six months. Local food prices can be kept moderate by ensuring that roads are cleared, so that traders can bring food in from other parts of the city.

Another example would be to support farmers through seed and tool distributions following crop failure due to pest infestation. Given that recovering from the lost harvest season could take up to twelve months, purchasing power might be maintained in the meantime through a voucher system, which subsidizes the price of basic commodities for affected households. At the same time, households at nutritional risk could be identified and food rations provided to specific target groups.

The recommendations in the report should be realistic and aim to set out a general strategy that will help decision-makers see the advantages and disadvantages of each option. In this way, the best decision can be taken.



All American Red Cross
Disaster Assistance Is Free

8 Considerations specific to urban food security assessments

Designing food security responses for urban households requires thorough assessment and analysis, as laid out in these guidelines. Urban and peri-urban settings often offer more diverse economic opportunities for households, making livelihood groups less homogeneous than in rural settings. This means households living in close proximity to each other may have different income levels, employment opportunities and coping strategies when subjected to food security shocks. In addition, food expenditure is a dynamic process for urban households, often involving the consumption of food outside of the home, procured from street vendors, or at work places and schools.

Examples of food security shocks affecting urban households

- Inflation, especially food price increases;
- Increase in transportation costs (fuel price increase, conflict);
- National currency devaluation;
- Company closures and layoffs;
- Changes in the number and character of household earners (divorce, illness, death);
- Changes in social and economic policy (structural adjustment, socio-economic decline);
- Civil conflict or increased crime rates.

(Adapted from Reference 10)

In urban settings, pay specific attention to:

- Defining your assessment area – use administrative boundaries that are easily recognized by your local guides, as well as by policy makers and public institutions;
- Collecting existing information and identifying information gaps for marginal neighbourhoods in city centres or on the periphery – especially with regard to slum dwellers and the homeless;
- Leaving enough time to talk directly to more than three households per chosen neighbourhood, so that you can estimate how diverse the community is;
- Focusing your analysis on the three pillars of food security (availability, access, utilization), while paying specific attention to the question of access – and how different income groups and households may be affected by their particular situations.

Food security responses for urban households

Think about how the Red Cross Red Crescent can best help support, protect and promote the food security of urban households by complementing existing responses or addressing the unmet needs of specific food insecure groups.

Tip Urban agriculture can be done in a variety of locations, such as:

- on vacant plots
- in home gardens
- in containers
- on balconies
- on roof tops
- in fishponds
- in school gardens
- in open spaces
- on road strips
- along railways
- below power lines
- on river banks
- in rivers
- on communal lands for community-based gardening

(Adapted from Reference 13)

The most common urban food security programmes can be grouped according to their objectives (adapted from Reference 8):

1. Enabling urban agriculture and gardens for own-consumption

- Securing sites for urban agriculture (e.g. growing vegetables and herbs, raising small livestock, bee-keeping);
- Providing seeds, tools and equipment for producing food;
- Offering training and education in relevant skills, and providing extension services for growing and marketing food;
- Promoting food processing techniques.

2. Generating income and employment

- Developing income-generation schemes (related or not to urban food production and processing);
- Assisting street food vendor and other informal food sector opportunities;
- Starting up micro-finance projects (loans for setting up non-food related businesses).

3. Improving access to market goods and services

- Improving local food outlet infrastructure (abattoirs, transport to wholesale markets, mobile shops);
- Providing food or cash vouchers (redeemable locally) to food insecure households;
- Creating fair price shops/cooperatives;
- Providing support and technical assistance to government food supply chain and distribution services.

Examples of urban food security responses

- **Food assistance** – for households either suddenly cut off from their normal food supply, or experiencing decreased purchasing power leading to a slow deterioration in their diet. Consider organizing the following:
 - a dry household ration (cooking fuel and equipment) for both the displaced and the host family;
 - collective feeding centres, where food is cooked on a daily basis for communal consumption;
 - cash or voucher systems, through which households can collect food at shops or eat at local restaurants;
 - links with formal and informal welfare support systems working with hardship cases, to assist in identifying food insecure households.
- **Urban agriculture and gardens for own-consumption** – using different means to help households supplement their diet and their incomes, through programmes such as: growing vegetables, herbs or aquatic foods; raising small livestock; taking up bee-keeping; supporting fresh food processing techniques (e.g. canning fruits, drying vegetables or making jam). In doing this, take into consideration:
 - land tenure, water access and transport constraints to urban agriculture;
 - contamination risks, as well as compliance with safety standards and commercial practices;
 - food production input provisions for households or groups. This can be given as a one-off for free or on credit (e.g. gardening tools, cooking pots, etc);
 - extension services⁵, geared to providing technical information, as well as information on markets and food quality control.
- **Income and employment** – since most urban households rely on income from employment, it is important to be aware of the minimum income levels needed for securing food and non-food needs prior to planning such an intervention. Consider projects such as:

⁵ Extension services are provided to the community by technical experts through household visits, organized group training sessions and the use of the media such as radio programmes. They may deal with topics such as agriculture, natural resource management, animal health, food hygiene and storage.

- start-up funds, technical support and training, and assistance with legal procedures to set up a viable business;
 - context-specific programmes with appropriate follow-up support over the first year;
 - membership-based organizations⁶, comprised of food vendors and others who gain their livelihood through selling or processing food.
- **Improving access to market goods and services** – to improve people’s physical and financial access to food through cheaper food outlets, bulk-buying or purchase of better quality fresh produce. Consider the following:
- a food purchase grant that will allow households to meet food needs for at least a month;
 - local government involvement, to ensure that food hygiene and trading regulations are met;
 - development of adequate infrastructure and transport facilities for food supply systems, working with local authorities by providing funding, and/or technical expertise.

Background documentation for food security assessments in (semi-)urban settings

1. FAO *Food For Cities* <http://www.fao.org/fcit/index.asp>. In particular:
 - The Briefing Guide for the Successful Implementation of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture http://www.fao.org/fcit/docs/briefing_guide.pdf
 - The implications of supermarket development for horticultural farmers and traditional marketing systems in Asia http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/subjects/en/agmarket/docs/asia_sups.pdf
 - The impact of supermarkets on Asian farmers <http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/subjects/en/agmarket/super.html>
 - See also FAO's website on Agricultural Marketing <http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/subjects/en/agmarket/super.html>
2. <http://www.eldis.org/food/urban.htm>
3. FAO *Experience Learning Series 27 - Participatory Urban Food and Nutrition Security Assessment Process* (September 2004) <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/ae590e/ae590e00.HTM>
http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban_security_en.stm
4. Examples of urban food security programmes <http://www.ifpri.org/themes/mp14/pubs.htm>
5. Ruel, M. et al, *Discussion Paper 51- Urban Challenges to Food and Nutrition Security*, IFPRI FSCN (October 1998) www.ifpri.org/themes/mp14/pubs.htm

Urban food security is becoming a matter of increasing concern: it has been predicted that by 2025, over 60 per cent of the world’s population will be living in cities. Latin America and Asia have already surpassed this figure (see Reference 11). Low-income households in large cities spend well over half of their incomes on food.

Always be prepared to find local solutions to the specific problems of those affected.

Responding to a crisis in urban settings offers National Societies the opportunity to draw on their extensive network of local volunteers – some of whom may even belong to the affected community.

Note

City and suburban farms supply food to about 700 million city dwellers - one-quarter of the world’s urban population (see Reference 11).

⁶ *Membership-based organizations encourage all members engaged in similar activities to benefit from each others’ technical expertise. Such organizations are owned by their members and often set up credit schemes. They present a common voice to authorities, requesting recognition and support for formalizing their trades.*





References



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2. Humanitarian Practice Network Paper, *Food-security assessments in emergencies: a livelihoods approach*. Young H., Jaspars S., Brown R., Frize J. and Khogali H. ODI, 2001.
http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/emergencies/how_we_work/downloads/Food-security-and-livelihoods.pdf
3. The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, 2004.
<http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/index.htm>
4. Chambers, R. and Conway G. *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. IDS Discussion Paper 296. Institute of Development Studies, 1991.
<http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/dp/dp296.pdf>
5. World Food Programme, *Emergency Needs Assessments: Report on the Proceeding of the Expert Consultation*, November 12-14, 2002, Italy.
6. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Food security and nutrition policy*, 2003.
<http://www.ifrc.org/who/policy/foodaid.asp>
7. Save the Children UK, *Household Economy Approach: A resource manual for practitioners*, Development Manual 6, 2000.
<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/foodsecurity/publications/index.htm>
8. The SPHERE Project Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Response*, Geneva (2004).
<http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/index.htm> (page 118)
9. Oxfam, *Cash-Transfer Programming in Emergencies*, Creti, P., Jaspars, S. 2006.
http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/add_info_024.asp
10. Patricia Bonnard, *Adjusting the FEWS rural vulnerability framework to urban environments*, July 2000.
<http://www.eldis.org/static/DOC1747.htm>
11. Food and Agriculture Organization. *Spotlight Magazine*, 2002.
<http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0206sp2.htm>
12. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies/ICRC. *Guidelines for cash transfert programming*. September, 2007.
13. Food and Agriculture Organization. *The Briefing Guide for the Successful Implementation of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture*, July 2001.
http://www.fao.org/fcit/docs/briefing_guide.pdf



10 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 children in the area are **acutely malnourished**.

Acutely malnourished children have not had food in sufficient quantity and quality for some weeks, either because food was not available, or because the child was very ill. As a result, they have not eaten enough. This could be due to loss of appetite, or because of they have not absorbed enough as a result of chronic diarrhoea. Such children lack sufficient calories to sustain their bodies; their bodies start 'eating' their own muscles. Their arm muscles shrink and their arms become thinner – this process is called 'wasting'.

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

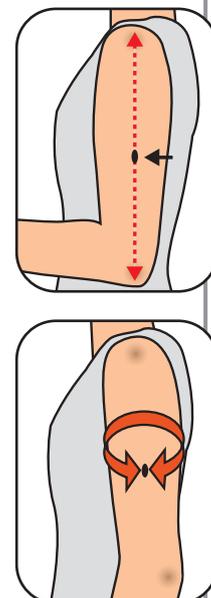
Usually you measure the circumference of the left mid-upper arm, which normally does not change much between the ages of one and five, but which wastes rapidly with malnutrition. The technique is not suitable for determining whether children are getting better after receiving more food. It is really only useful for quickly determining, within a group of small children, if a particular child is at high risk of dying from severe malnutrition. Boys and girls are measured in the same way.

A low MUAC measurement will not indicate the *cause of malnutrition*; as mentioned earlier, malnutrition can have different causes. During your food security assessment, it is very important to try to find out if the malnutrition is being caused by illness, lack of food in the family, chronic diarrhoea or some other reason. Clearly, food aid will not really help these children, if their thinness is due to severe illness resulting in loss of appetite.

How to measure MUAC

Step 1

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. Measure around the upper arm at the midpoint and make sure that the numbers are right side up. Make sure the tape is flat against 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

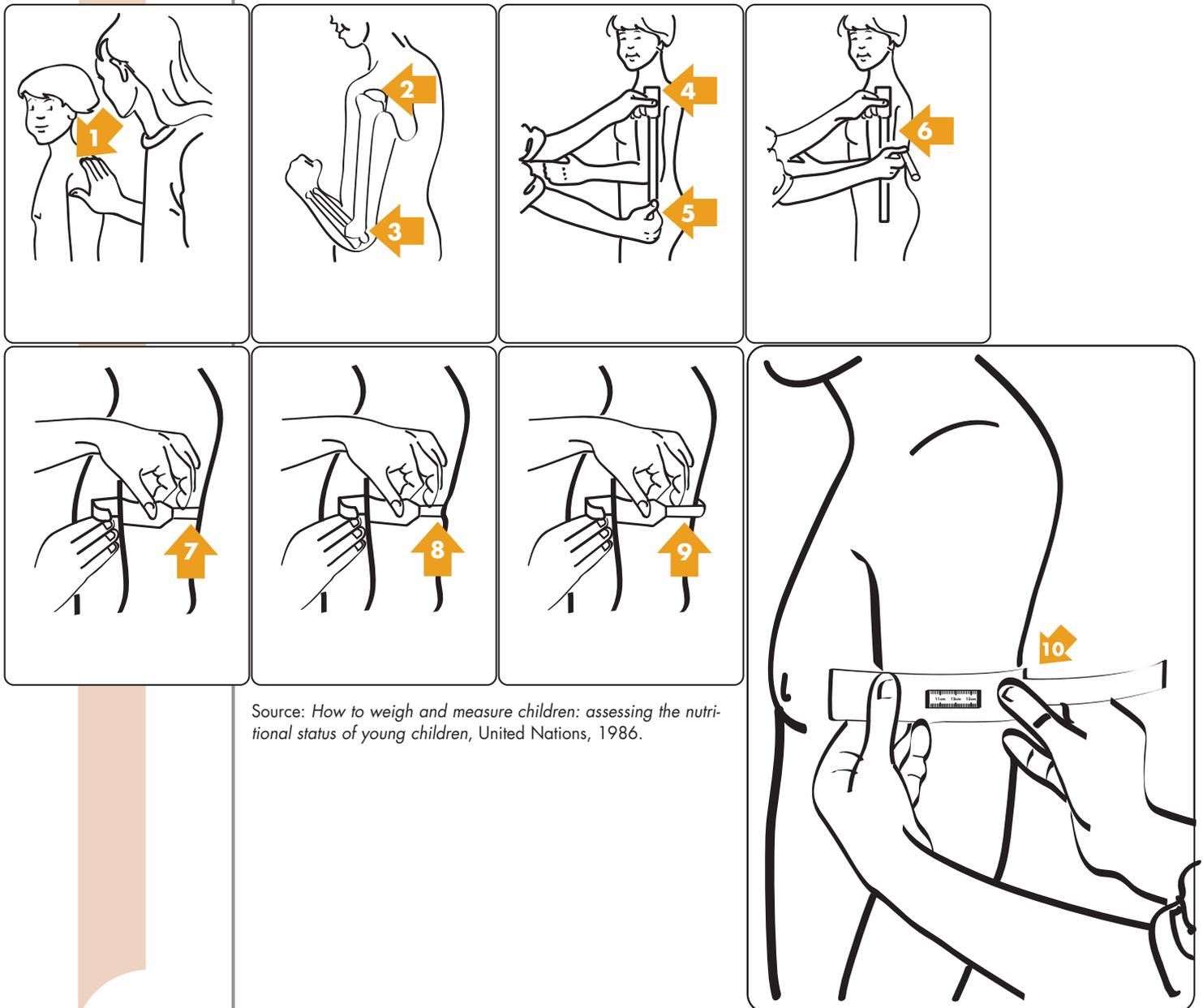
Once the tape is in the correct position, with the correct tension, read the measurement in centimetres (cm) to the nearest 0.1cm (arrow 10). If you have an assistant, tell them the result and have them write it down immediately. Make sure that it has been recorded accurately. Loosen the tape on the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

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

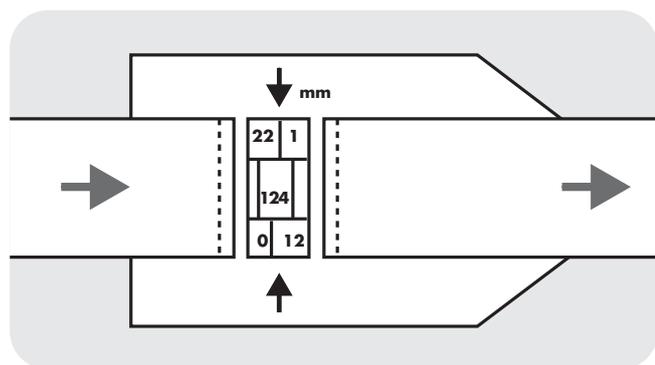


Source: *How to weigh and measure children: assessing the nutritional status of young children*, United Nations, 1986.

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 in the rapid classification of cases as severe acute, moderate acute, or mild acute/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. Stay 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 the 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 have just measured has severe, moderate, or mild acute malnutrition. Look at the table below and see in which category your result falls. Mark the category with a cross.

You can use this table to fill in 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	
				Total number of children measured:

Examples:

- If one child’s MUAC reads 11.3 cm, this child is suffering from moderately acute malnutrition since the result falls between 11–12.4 cm.
- If another child’s MUAC reads 13.3 cm, this child is either mildly malnourished or not 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 either mildly malnourished or not 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
				Total of children measured:

You will eventually count the number of children within each category, arriving at a total number for each of these – i.e. the number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition, from moderate acute malnutrition, and those children who are not malnourished. If you wish, you can also express these results as **percentages**.

The following figure shows an example of a completed table, where 20 children between the ages of one to five 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
				Total of children measured: 20

Five children out of 20 show severe acute malnutrition:

$$5/20 \times 100 = 25 \text{ per cent}$$

Eight children out of 20 show moderate acute malnutrition:

$$8/20 \times 100 = 40 \text{ per cent}$$

Seven children out of 20 are either mildly malnourished or not malnourished:

$$7/20 \times 100 = 35 \text{ per cent}$$

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

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

Description of background and context in which the 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.

Pakistan Background

On 8 October 2005, the District of Muzaffarabad (95km north of Islamabad) was the epicentre of an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter Scale, with seismic shocks felt as far away as Kabul and New Delhi. The Government has estimated that over 73,000 people lost their lives, about 128,000 were injured, and 3.5 million became instantly homeless. Nine hundred camps have been set up by the government, to meet the basic needs of the affected population during the extremely cold winter months. The mountainous North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistan-administered Kashmir were already vulnerable to food insecurity and had been receiving government support through market interventions and pre-positioning of food stocks to help people during the winter. People are engaged mainly in small-holder farming, livestock rearing and waged labour. The earthquake has led to the loss of one third of the rice and two thirds of the maize harvest, severely affecting winter fodder for livestock.

The Red Cross Red Crescent response involves ICRC and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, and the International Federation and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in the NWFP. Relief is being provided for up to 1.1 million people through setting up mobile health units, providing water and sanitation and installing water purification units, providing psycho-social teams, and engaging in disaster preparedness capacity-building activities. Food security is supported through distributions of seeds and fertilizer, as well as tools to 4,500 and 1,500 families respectively (for agricultural use), and of 250,000 seedlings for forestry and fruit trees. The government and other agencies have also been quick to respond, notably with food aid, livelihood and housing reconstruction programmes.

Example 1

Belize Background

Hurricane Iris, with winds of up to 140 miles per hour, struck Belize on 8-9 October 2001, causing 22 deaths so far, and seriously damaging the towns of Placencia, Independence, and Monkey River in Toledo District, destroying 72 per cent of homes and over 70 public buildings. There is no electricity in the affected areas. This is the fourth storm to strike Belize in the space of only three years – each storm having caused significant economic damage, particularly in their impact on the crucial tourism industry.

The government has appealed for international help, to be channelled through the Belize Red Cross Society and United Nations agencies in collaboration with the authorities. The International Federation has deployed two delegates, from the Dominican Republic and Mexico Delegations, to support the Belize Red Cross in its response. Local donations from non-affected areas in Belize have been generous, but transport to the affected region is proving difficult. An appeal was launched within 24 hours of the hurricane.

Example 2

Example 3 Eritrea Background

Eritrea is a food insecure country. On average, the country produces only 60 to 70 per cent of its total food needs during good years and not more than 25 per cent during poor years. This 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; shortage of food in the markets; lack of capacity to produce food or earn income to purchase food; insufficient knowledge of nutrition, sanitation and proper child care practices; and cultural practices that limit 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 have led to a significant decline in productivity per household.

Red Cross intervention so far: A joint assessment was undertaken by the government, UN organizations and other NGOs, and a fact-finding team from the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Following this, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea launched an appeal through the Federation to support 45,000 people in 2003, and 50,000 people in 2004 in the most drought-affected areas of Zoba Anseba, Hagaz Sub-Zoba. The intervention included monthly dry food distribution based on (...).

Example 4 West Africa Background

A serious food crisis is developing in many 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 – the worst in the last 20 years.

The FAO took the lead role in combating the locusts, mainly by spraying pesticides from aircraft. However, this came too late for many farmers, especially those in isolated geographical areas. The impact is most severe in communities with already limited coping mechanisms, worsening their food insecurity. According to FAO estimates, about 9.3 million people are affected by the combined impact of the locust infestation and reduced rainfall. Up to 60 per cent of 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), 3 million in Burkina Faso, and 1.7 million in Mali. Locust swarms are expected to return in larger numbers, with a devastating impact on these vulnerable communities, given the already fragile food security situation in the Sahel countries.

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

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

Example	Assessment objective
Pakistan, NWPF	To assess the market supply of food into the affected areas and the capacity for livelihood recovery of the population affected by the earthquake.
Belize, Toledo District	To identify the food security needs of the people affected by the hurricane in Toledo District, and decide whether food aid is needed beyond the immediate short-term response.
Eritrea	To define the magnitude of food assistance which the National Society needs to provide for the next two years, as well as exploring and defining other options to improve food security.
West Africa	To assess the severity of the food insecurity situation due to the locust invasion and compounding drought, and identify intervention gaps that the Federation can respond to regionally.

See also Section 5 - How to define food security objectives.

List of activities that the team or individual team members must undertake

See example 2 - Belize, Toledo District

Collect statistics on population, economic activities and sectors, and public service infrastructure.

Assess access routes to affected areas and organise transport in coordination with the National Society and United Nations agencies.

Carry out interviews and focus group discussions with affected communities and key-informants in the affected towns to identify how people are covering their current food needs.

Assess the viability of local food traders to keep food supplies coming into the affected areas and maintain prices stable.

Quantify the food and non-food donations being collected and distributed as part of the initial emergency response, determine how these stocks are being distributed, and estimate how long they will last.

Assess how long it will take for people to get back to their normal work activities, which groups will find extra work in construction and clearing activities, and which groups will suffer longer periods of unemployment. Assess governmental and non-governmental assistance and compensation packages being planned for people who have lost their homes and/or jobs.

Coordinate with local and central authorities and decide if any food aid is required beyond the initial response. Design an appropriate food ration and a distribution mechanism which can be monitored.

See example 4 – West Africa

Take account of all relevant assessment reports and recommendations regarding the upcoming food crisis in the Sahel countries carried out by WFP, CILSS, FAO and other organizations.

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

Review past experience of interventions, and assess current and additional capacity requirements of the National Societies to implement recommendations.

Recommend areas of intervention by the National Societies in the realm of food security, based on their past experience and existing capacities.

Together with the National Societies, update disaster response plans in light of the food security situation and develop a detailed plan of action for Red Cross assistance programmes.

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

Assess the International Federation's regional capacity to provide assistance to the National Societies in addressing food security issues.

Develop recommendations for the International Federation's Regional Delegation on ways to support National Societies' activities in food security until December 2005.

Expected output: depends on the objectives and will vary with each assessment. It usually refers to written information produced as a result of the assessment.

Examples of **expected output** include:

- a report incorporating the findings of the food security assessment, including recommendations for food security assistance to be undertaken by the National Society;
- an action plan, both short and long term, covering proposed food security assistance;
- a food security analysis of the assessment area, identifying the most food-insecure groups and those most vulnerable to becoming food-insecure, and making proposals on how best to assist them; or
- a plan of activities to reduce food insecurity in the longer-term.

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

Example	Duration of assessment
Pakistan, NWFP	Two weeks: a rapid two-day price assessment immediately after the earthquake to determine whether food assistance is required, followed by a longer and fuller assessment of disruptions to the food market supply chain. This is best carried out some two weeks after the event.
Belize, Toledo District	Ten days: one week for the assessment and three days to write up and discuss recommendations.
Eritrea	Four weeks: three weeks for the food security assessment and one week for reporting.
West Africa	Six weeks: including assessment, report writing, and presentation of the final report and recommendations to the Regional Delegation.

Composition of team: this should specify composition of the whole team, listing the various areas of expertise of team members.

Example	Assessment team
Pakistan, NWFP	Two economic or livelihood delegates with knowledge of the region and local food habits
Belize, Toledo District	Two local branch volunteers and two food security delegates
Eritrea	Two food security officers, one local language interpreter and one local branch volunteer.
West Africa	The food security assessment is a part of a larger assessment exercise: the assessment team will consist of one team leader, one food security expert, one water and sanitation expert and one health specialist.

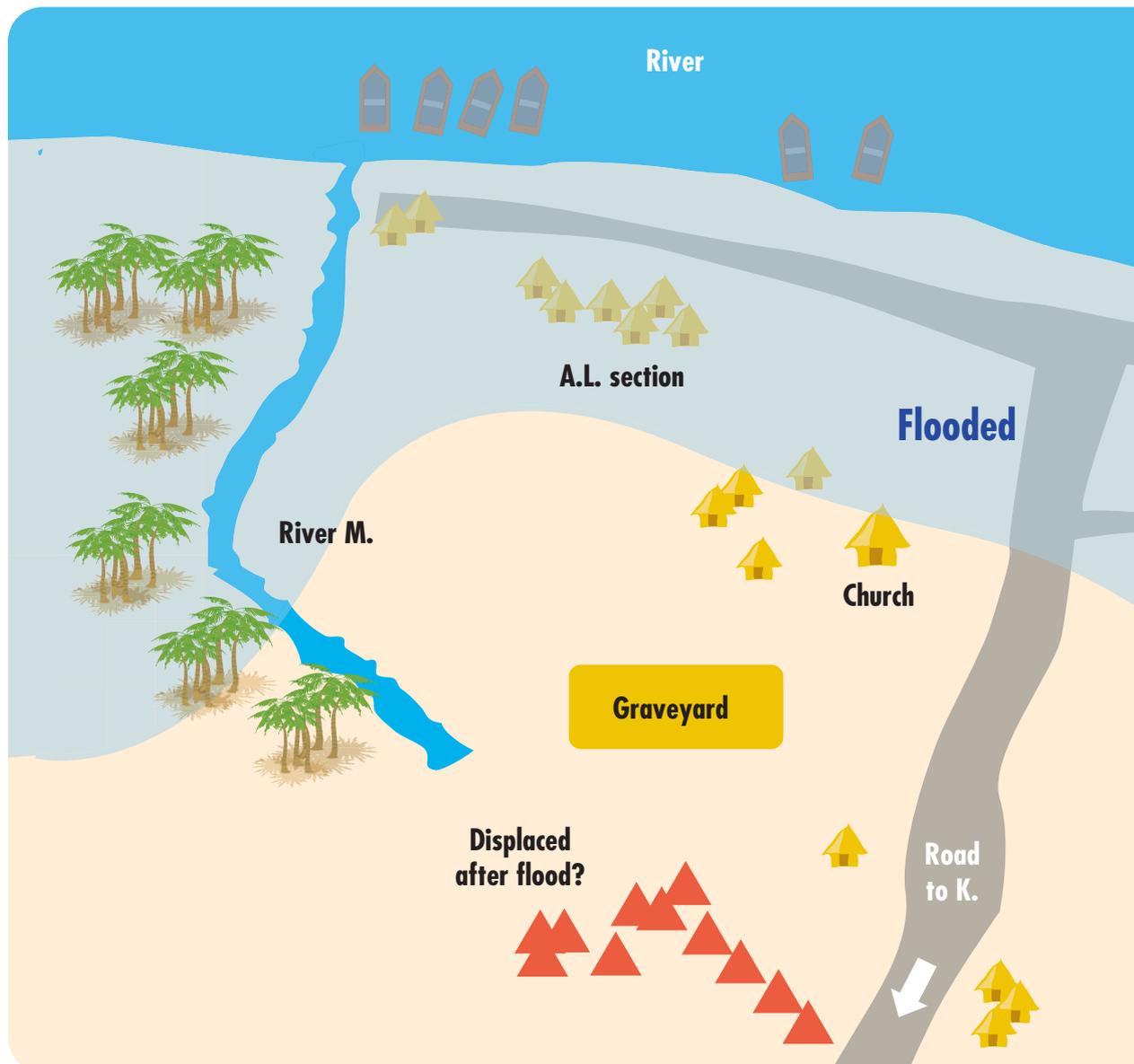
Annex 3

How to do mapping

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

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

- To make sure that you are able to find your way back to the area where you made your assessment: this is especially important if you plan to provide assistance. Your map will need to include significant landmarks, major roads, rivers, bridges, potential obstacles, and other important villages and sites.
- To make a visual representation of the main areas affected by a disaster: for example, your map needs to indicate areas that have been affected by flooding or earthquakes, or to which people have moved to in order to seek refuge. It should also show the main transport routes, indicating which ones are blocked and which 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 con-



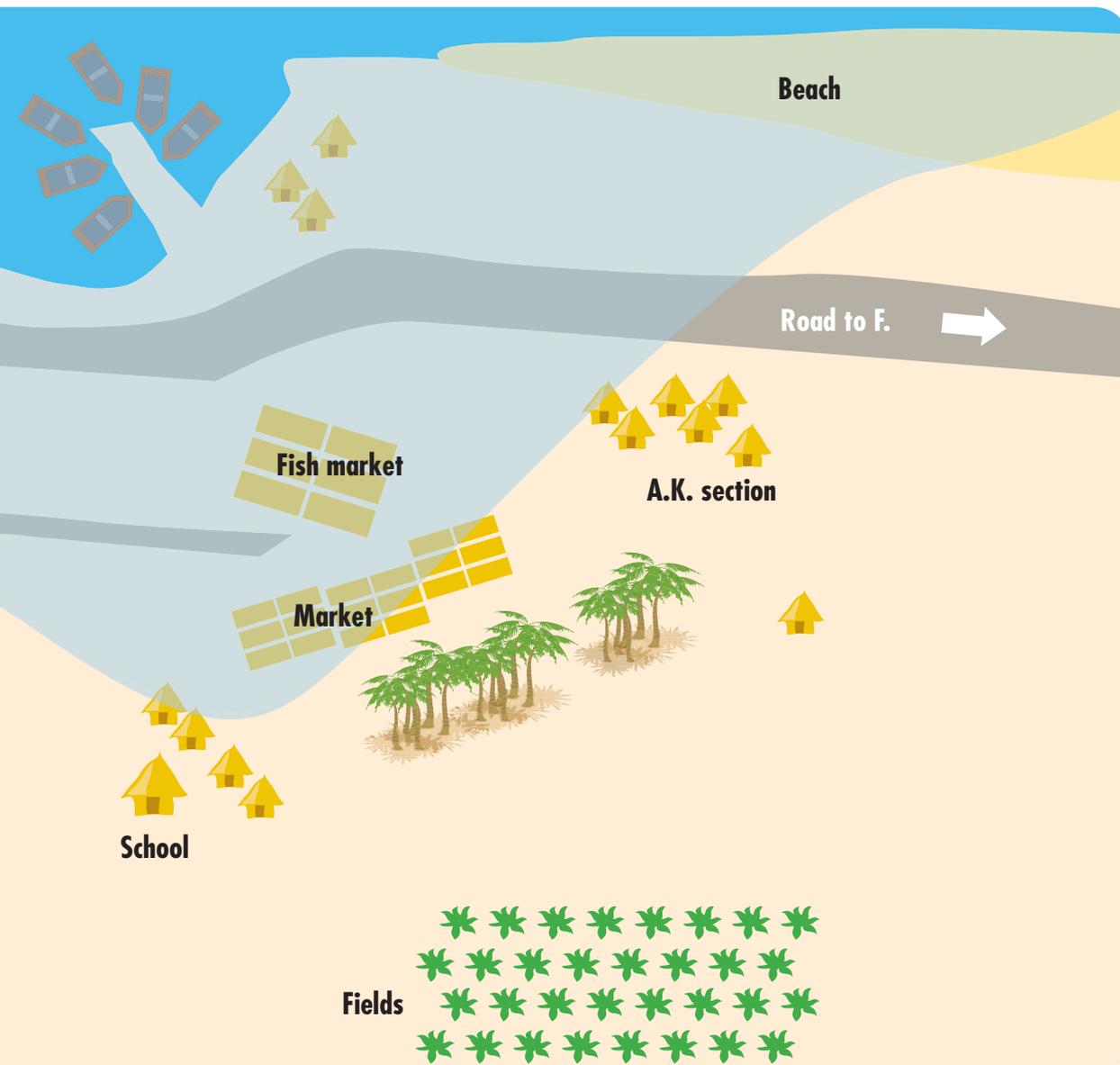
taining particular social or ethnic groups or displaced people, and areas of restricted access. If you plan to provide food aid, such information is vital to help determine the most appropriate site for storing and distributing food. It should not be too far from the majority of the population, in a place that everybody can find, not too close to animals, and not too remote (to reduce the chance of theft).

- To distinguish those neighbourhoods in a city which have been most severely affected or have been deserted, from those that remain functional and inhabited after the disaster.

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

Example of a map of a flooded village

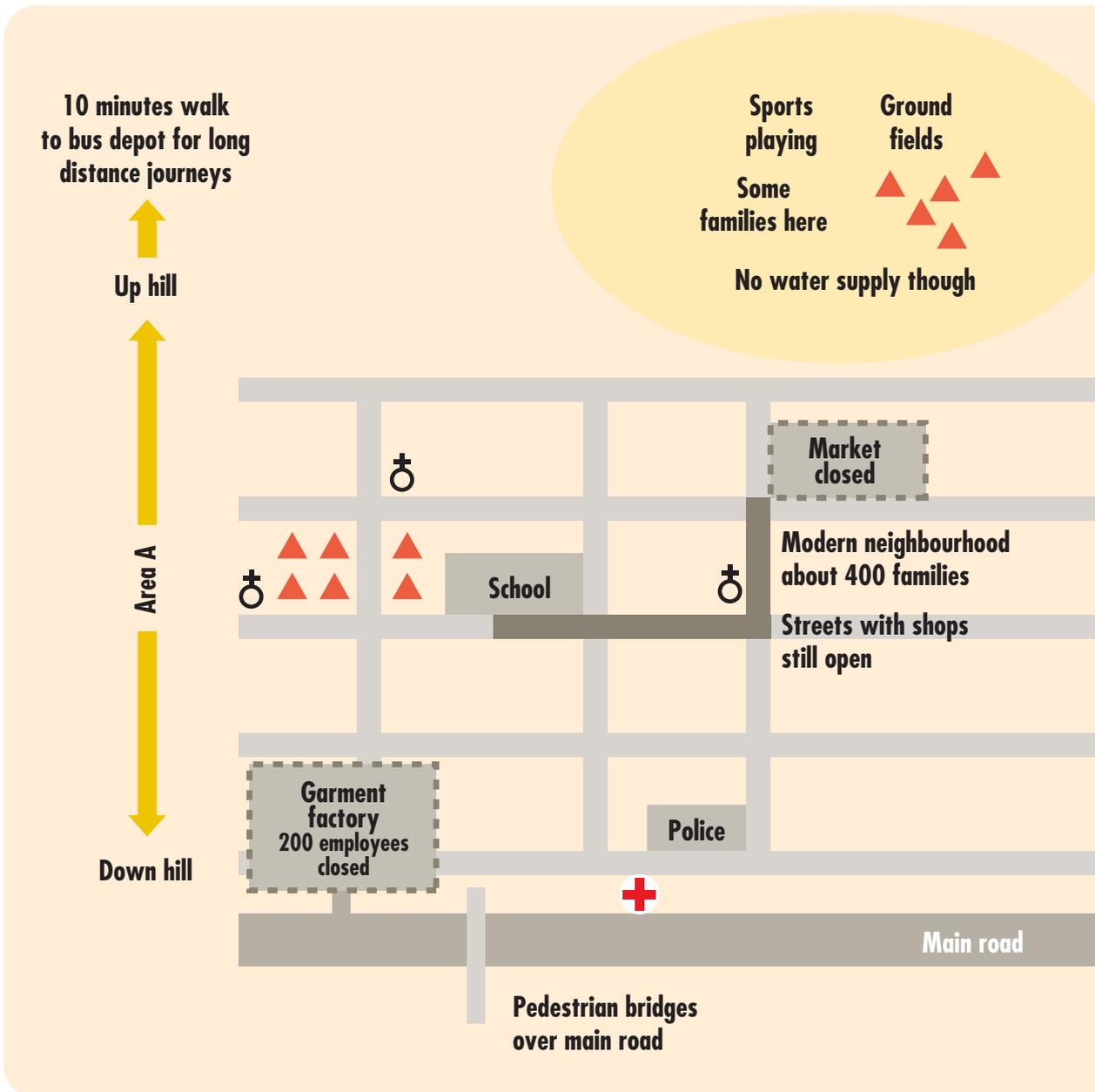
The following map shows that residential areas have been seriously affected by a flooded river and that market places have also become temporarily unusable. In addition, it appears that villages F and K are no longer linked by road. The fields are not affected. The map also shows where people have relocated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



Example of a map of an urban neighbourhood struck by an earthquake

The following map shows one particular neighbourhood, set in a hilly part of a city in Central America. The map includes the assessment area – the most affected area at the top right – which has been evacuated and cordoned off by the authorities, as the houses are unsafe. About 250 families have been displaced to the more modern neighbourhood a little farther down. Some families have moved to other parts of the city to stay with relatives.

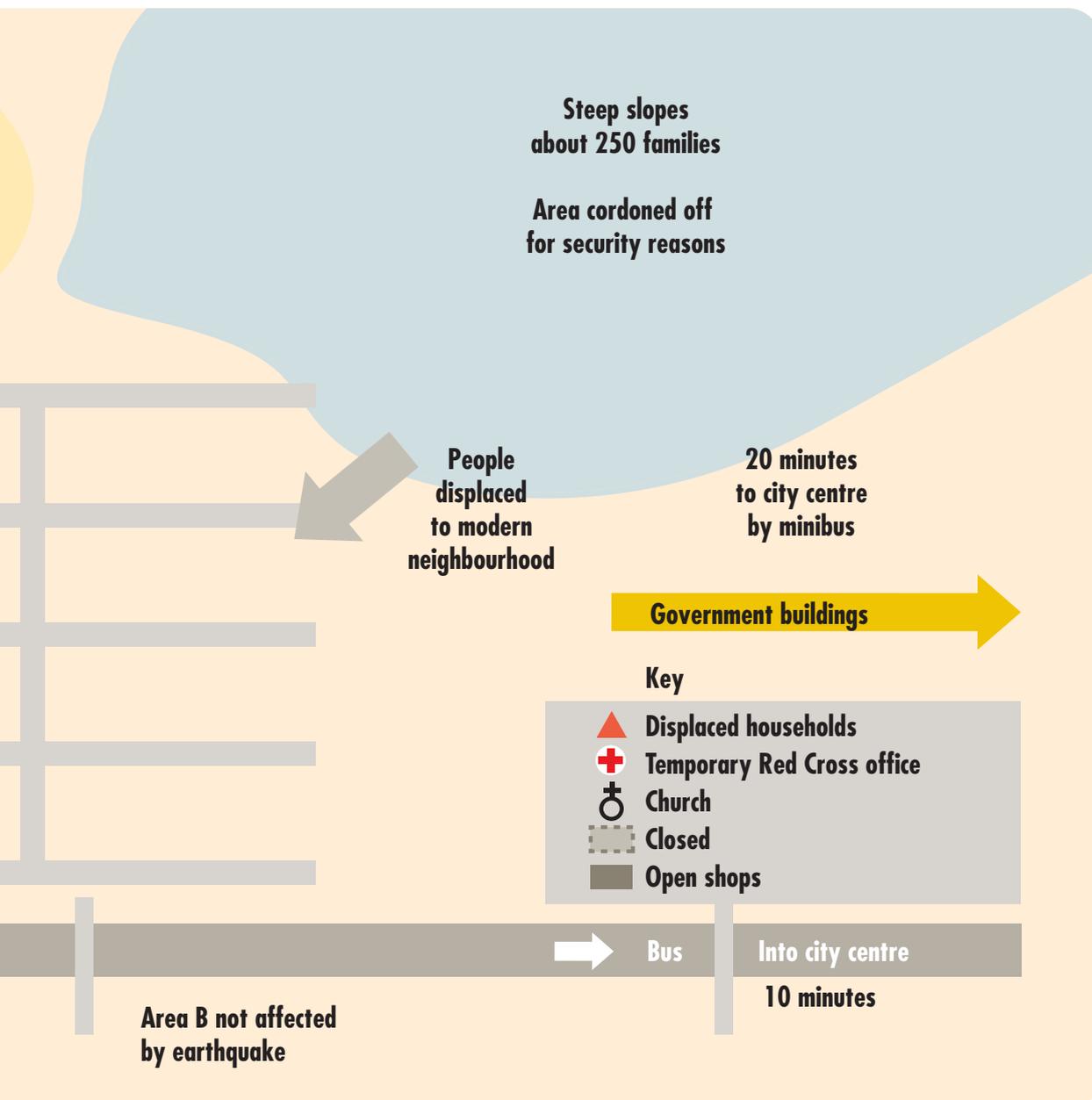
The map also indicates where people have relocated to, the areas most seriously damaged, and the main access routes to the assessment area. It does not tell us if other parts of the city have been affected. The grid layout which characterizes modern neighbourhood A makes it easy to locate the main public services – such as police, schools and churches – although these are not fully functioning (marked with a broken line). The map locates some of the shops that have re-opened since the earthquake – roads in these areas are likely to be busier than in the rest of that neighbourhood. The local garment factory employing about 200 people has closed and is being used as a temporary shelter. The National Society has opened a temporary office and is providing support in organizing rubble clearance teams, soup kitchens and the registration of damage to homes.



This map clearly shows that the affected community is separated by a main road that can only be crossed using pedestrian walkways. Additional information – for example, that the city centre is a 20 minutes bus ride away, and that there is a bus depot 10 minutes walk away – helps us understand that the community is not totally cut off. The main road appears to be open.

The map can be used with key-informants to discuss in greater detail issues such as: where people have moved to, which roads are passable, and which areas people are avoiding. It also allows the assessment team to visit the identified community buildings, in order to locate more key-informants and get closer to the affected population.

These maps are rough and ready, but allow for quick orientation by outsiders. It is possible to use photocopies of existing street maps of affected neighbourhoods in order to be more precise. However, sketches such as the below provide time-efficient tools for understanding how the community has been reshaped by the earthquake.



Annex 4

How to make a seasonal calendar

It is very common for the food security situation in a given area to fluctuate over a 12 month period. 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 for 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 at which times of year food may be scarce. With a seasonal calendar, people can describe the seasonal factors relating to food security, such as: the growing cycle of different food crops (planting, weeding and harvesting), the production of different livestock products, varying demands for labour, rainfall variations, disease patterns, food price fluctuations, and animal or population movements. This is useful in showing seasonal variations in food availability, access and utilization for communities.

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

- population movement;
- income flow and times of year with extra expenses (festivals, school fees);
- workload;
- food price increases;
- disease patterns;
- weather, including rainfall (amount and intensity), wind storms, and temperature;
- harvest time and animal movements.

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

- to identify seasonal patterns of weather, employment, disease, etc;
- to identify normal and abnormal changes over the year in the prices of food and non-food items, wages, or fluctuations in interest rates on credit repayments;
- to identify the ‘hunger gap’ and the normal period of plenty (often just after the harvest);
- to identify whether the situation can be expected to improve or deteriorate at a particular time of year, and who will be particularly vulnerable; and
- to compare a normal year with the current situation.

Seasonal calendars are a useful tool in helping you to plan possible interventions so that they fit in with local schedules – for instance, seed distribution in time for the planting season, or logistical planning for pre-positioning food stocks ahead of the rainy season, when roads are likely to become impassable. They also allow you to take people’s workload into account and avoid planning large participatory events when people are busy with seasonal activities – like collecting materials to rebuild roofs, celebrating a cultural event, or migrating for seasonal work.

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 – the community may be more used to thinking in terms of “seasons” rather than calendar months.

How to construct a seasonal calendar:

- In preparation, make a preliminary list of the elements you want the calendar to describe: activities associated with different livelihoods such as agriculture or seasonal factory work; weather patterns, including rainy, hot, and cold periods; disease patterns such as the incidence of acute respiratory infection, malaria or diarrhoeal diseases; or migration patterns to supplement family income, such as seasonal employment in construction or mining.
- The calendar can be compiled with a mixed group of people containing representatives from all livelihood groups, or with separate livelihood groups and individuals. You select the group. They will be your key-informants.
- 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 the relative amount of rainfall – more stones equals more rain. If relevant, do the same for temperature and wind patterns.
- Draw a line under this section of the calendar.
- Now ask people about the topics you are interested in, one by one, indicating those months during which the activity or the event is more frequent, and those when it is less frequent. For example, ask them to mark the times when they normally plant and harvest their main crops and minor crops, and when they are involved in food gathering activities – all in descending order of importance. Also ask about employment opportunities and income-generating activities such as street vending, work during the tourism season, preparations for festivals, and sales of labour, crops, animals, and handicrafts.
- Next, ask participants to rank each period in terms of the quantity of household food stores or cash they usually have available; the larger the food and cash stores the more stones should be used. Remember that rural communities may be growing some or most of their food and urban communities may be more reliant on weekly purchases. You may also identify those times of year when urban populations get food supplies directly from relatives in the country or receive remittances from abroad. You may detect patterns of spending on food associated with the frequency of wage payments. This provides you with a visual representation of how the timing of your assessment fits into the normal order of seasonal fluctuations. You can foresee expected changes and analyse the present situation accordingly.

(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, the household food stocks are empty, grain is expensive and there is a heavy weeding work-load in the fields. The household food security situation is likely to be at its worst at this period in time.

Example of a seasonal calendar from Belize

The seasonal calendar (see page 76) depicts the timing of activities related to food production and income-generation for different livelihood groups.

The assessment was carried out in October, following a hurricane; the calendar highlights – at a glance – the types of food security interventions which would be most appropriate in the immediate term, and those which would be less so. For instance, the tomato planting season (which begins in November) could be supported through a seed distribution programme; on the other hand, sweet

peppers may not be able to grow during these months. Similarly, cocoa planting and/or lobster catching are not seasonal activities in November. However, you may wish to focus your food security intervention on people who are dependent on these resources, so as to ensure that their food needs are met. One specific group to monitor closely may be those people involved in tourism: they may be at risk if the hurricane deters visitors from travelling to Belize; on the other hand, they may be amongst the first to recover, if tourism returns and they can earn money as usual.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Rainfall		Heavy rain										
Hurricane season												
Day Temperature in Celsius	40	40	40				32	32	32			
Lobster catching		→										
Tourism (hotels and water sports)	→						High season	→				
Sweet pepper		Planting		→			Harvest					
Tomato							Planting	Harvest				
Staple inland crops – maize, beans food stocks	Plant maize	→		Harvest maize	Plant beans	→	Harvest beans	Plant maize	→		Harvest maize	
Cash crops – cocoa First harvest after 4 years				Plant	→							

Make sure that you double-check the seasonal calendar with a number of key-informants, and check again when you are discussing possible food security interventions: geographical differences, which you did not capture during the assessment, may emerge later and will need to be included in your intended programme area.

Example of a country in Asia



WET SEASON



DRY SEASON



FISH CATCH



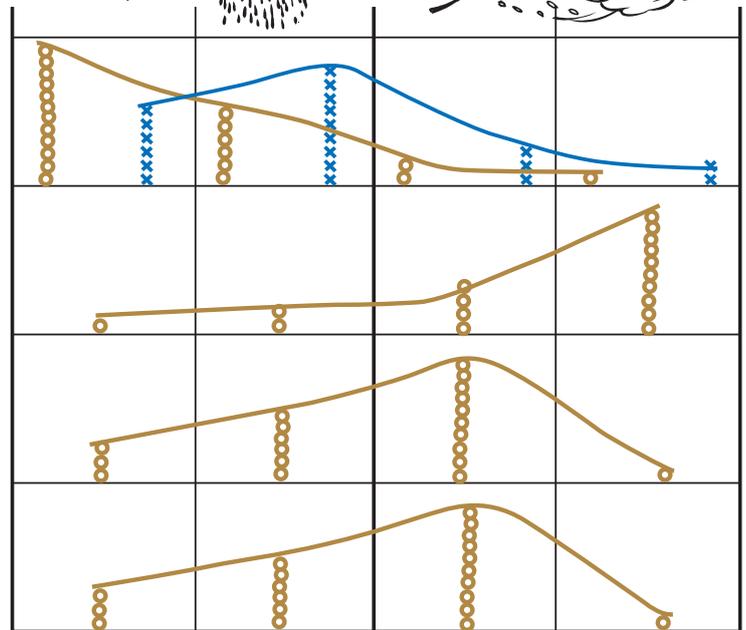
ILL HEALTH



FOOD AVAILABILITY



INCOME



○ PARTICIPANT 1 × PARTICIPANT 2

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

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

Annex 5

How to do proportional piling

Proportional piling helps in estimating *quantities and proportions*, especially when working with people who are not used to quantifying certain information. Proportional piling is often used to determine the *relative importance* of things; for example, the proportion of **income** that a family receives from several different sources, its main **expenditures**, or its **food consumption** and different **ways of obtaining food**.

In addition to helping us 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. 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 (i.e. the situation before a crisis) and a second time with regard 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 subject areas (i.e. income, expenditure, food consumption, and food acquisition). This would take a lot of time and people will lose interest. You can vary and choose the subjects you use for proportional piling, as long as you are consistent throughout the assessment. This will enable you to compare different groups and areas, each one over time. It is nevertheless crucial to always ask about food consumption patterns; make sure you always include this topic (especially during focus groups discussions with women).

To undertake a proportional piling, you will need about **100 dried beans, stones, beads or anything of a similar size**, with some additional ones as a reserve in case of loss. In urban settings, where people may be more literate, you may be able to ask them to respond directly, using **percentage figures**.

Example: proportional piling for sources of income

Explain the objective of the exercise to the people; namely, that you would like to know what sources of income they have in a *normal or average year*. Ask them to name the main ones.

List these and then ask them to divide up the beans according to the relative importance of each source of income. For instance, they may have received income from selling milk and producing wheat, with wheat providing twice as much income 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* sources of income. For example, a bad harvest due to a drought might have reversed the situation: their income from milk may now have doubled, while wheat only generates a small income.

Examples of sources of income:

- Labour and employment for wages
- Crop sales
- Livestock and sales from related products
- Trade (transport, re-sale of goods)
- Craft-making (mats, baskets, pots)
- Sale of firewood, charcoal, wild foods (such as mushrooms or berries), scrap metal, recycled garbage
- Social welfare, remittances, gifts, allowance, zakat.

Example: Proportional piling for sources of food

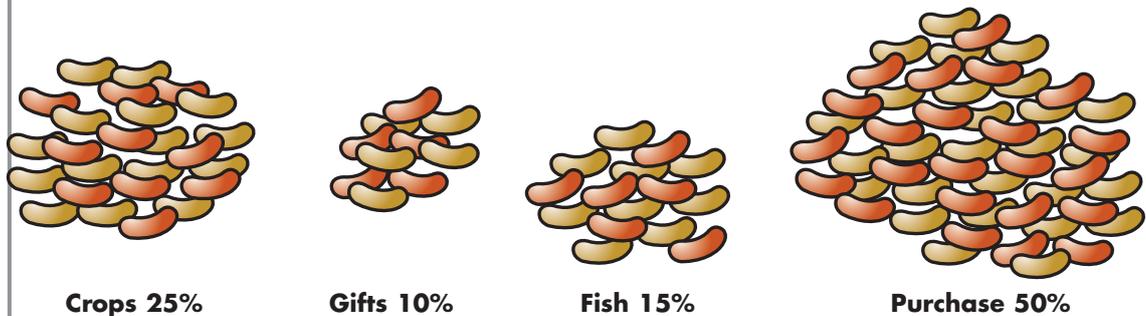
During a focus group discussion, people tell you that in a *normal year*, on average, they obtain food in the following ways:

- own crop production: they place 60 beans in that pile (i.e. 60 per cent);
- purchase: 15 beans (i.e. 15 per cent);
- fishing: 10 beans (i.e. 10 per cent); and
- barter or exchange: 15 beans (i.e. 15 per cent).

Examples of sources of obtaining food:

- Own crop production
- Own livestock products (milk, meat)
- Corner shop or local market
- Local cooperative
- Larger wholesale market
- Purchase or exchange in terms of labour (food for work)
- Wild food
- Fishing, hunting
- Gifts of food, food at work or school
- Barter
- Loans/credit from shop owner
- Stocks

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 no longer sufficient to feed them and they now need to purchase much more food. 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. You must now examine the issue with the group in greater depth to determine the extent to which this may be a damaging coping mechanism in the long-term.

Example: proportional piling for sources of expenditure

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

Examples of sources of expenditure:

- Food
- Household items (soap, clothes)
- Rent
- Transport costs
- Inputs: livestock drugs, water for live-stock, rent for land, seeds, fertilizer, carpentry tools, ice-making machine, motorbike, street vendor licence
- Water, electricity, firewood, charcoal
- Gifts, zakat
- School (fees, supplies, uniform)
- Taxes
- Milling
- Medicine and consultations

During the discussion, people give you the following information:

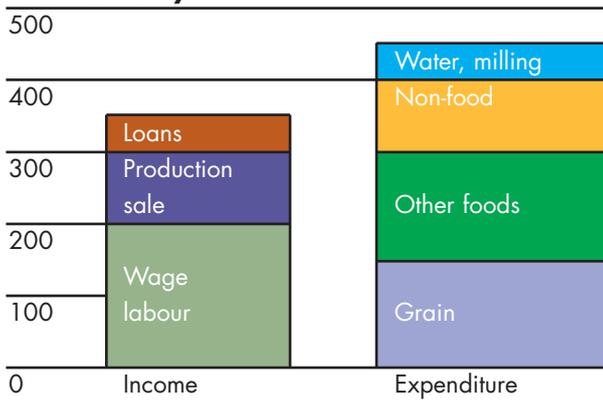
Expenses in a normal year	Beans	Current expenses	Beans
Food	50	Food	74
Education	15	Education	8
Non-food items	13	Non-food items	5
Taxes	11	Taxes	9
Charity	5	Charity	1
Health	6	Health	3

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 record both *income and expenditure patterns* in similarly-expressed values, you can make some useful comparisons. For example, the community tells you that on average their *income* is 350 units of the local currency, of which sale of produce brings in 100, wage labour 200, and loans 50. Assuming they give you similarly-expressed information regarding their *expenditures* (for instance, that they spend 300 units of the local currency on food including grain, 50 on water and milling and 100 on non-food items), you will be able to make a comparison and see to what extent they are earning more than they spend, or vice versa.

However, you should be aware that some communities may be handling more than one currency, especially if they are close to an international border crossing, where dollars may be used simultaneously with the local currency. Try to become familiar with both rates. For example the local custom may be to refer to small, specific expenditures (such as daily outgoings on food) in terms of the local currency, and to more costly individual or recurring expenditures (such as rent or the cost of a motorbike) in US dollars.

Local currency



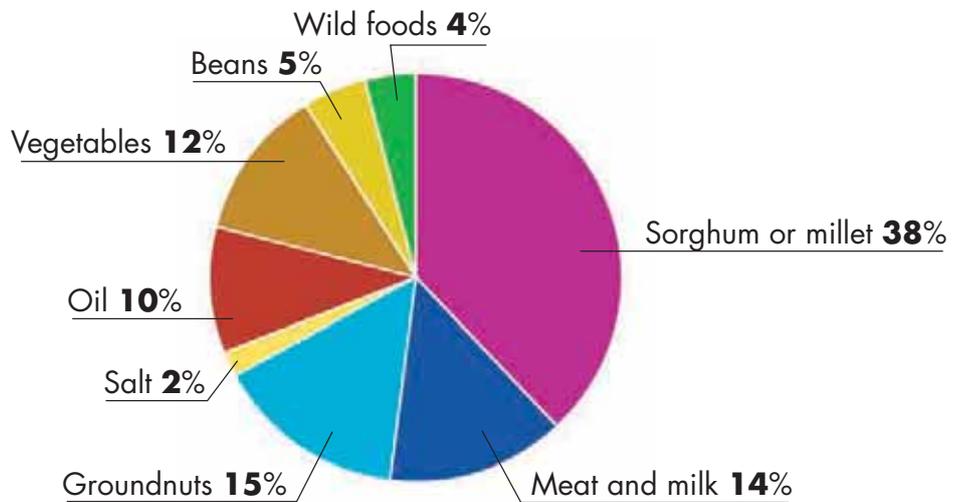
Example: proportional piling for food consumption

- Explain to 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 consumed per category. You should try to become familiar with local foods by visiting local markets and shops. It can be helpful to ask people to bring a sample of each kind of food, so that you can learn to recognise them readily. For example, have with you a handful of grain, some vegetables, some local herbs or a packet of flavouring – so that people can pile the appropriate number of beans behind each group. It may be easier to bring some of these products in a small plastic bag, each bag symbolizing one of the main food groups (e.g. a few beans, grains, tubers, dried meat, salt, groundnuts, the label from a tin of oil, etc). This makes the whole exercise easier to

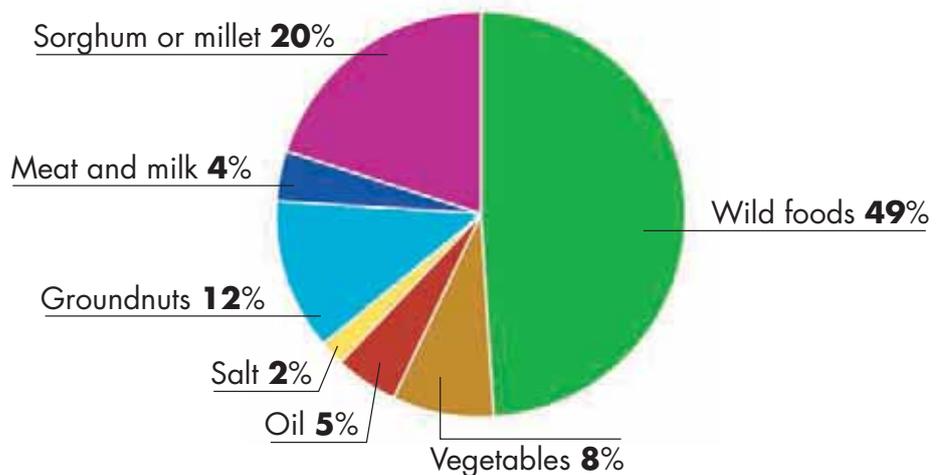
manage. Experience shows that people become more interested and see it as a kind of game. In an urban setting, you may be able to obtain a food chart from the local health facility, listing the main food categories in the area. These posters are a striking and useful way for people to identify the foods they eat and those they do not. The less familiar you are with the context, the more preparation you will need in order to learn local food preferences.

- Carry out the same exercise for people's current food consumption and then compare the two sets of results.
- You can also use this exercise for different groups of people within the household – for example, children and the elderly.

Composition of diet in an average year – Sudan



Composition of current diet – Sudan



The results show that the community put four beans (4 per cent) for wild foods as part of their diet in a normal year, but 49 beans (49 per cent) for wild foods as part of their current diet. This clearly illustrates that food consumption patterns have changed, and that people might have severe problems in 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 the question directly or by doing proportional piling in two groups: one consisting only of men, and the second one composed only of women.

Example: Proportional piling to identify any variations in food consumption between different wealth groups.

- Find out what foods are most commonly consumed at this time of year within the assessment area (i.e. what makes up an average diet). List the foods according to general categories.
- Ask household representatives from each of the two wealth groups if they have consumed these foods over the past week.
- Go down the list of food categories one by one, obtaining yes or no answers to begin with.
- Then ask each group to place a bean for every time they have consumed these foods during the week (i.e. if they ate rice twice a day during whole week, then 14 beans will be needed).
- Make sure you listen to what people say as they recall the number of times they ate the foods, as this part of the exercise is often very revealing and can help you identify further questions.
- You will soon be able to see the monotonous diets of the food insecure, compared with the more varied diets of those who are wealthier.
- Be aware that family composition may influence the foods eaten.

An example from Pakistan following the 2005 earthquake illustrates the differing diets in food secure versus food insecure households, as follows:

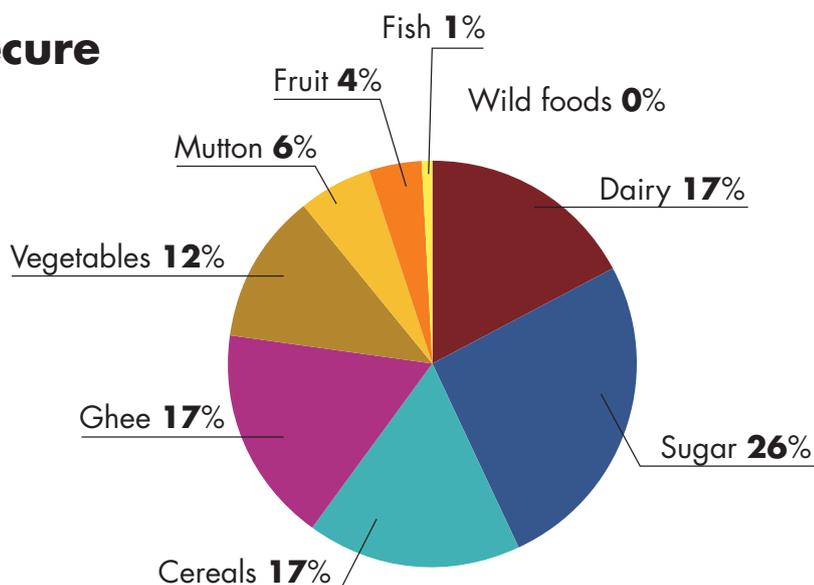
The average number of food servings of food products in one week

	Food secure households	Food insecure households
Dairy	14	0
Sugar	20	0
Cereals	14	16
Ghee	14	10
Vegetables	10	3
Mutton	5	1
Fruit	3	0
Fish	1	0
Wild foods	0	1
Total servings	81	31

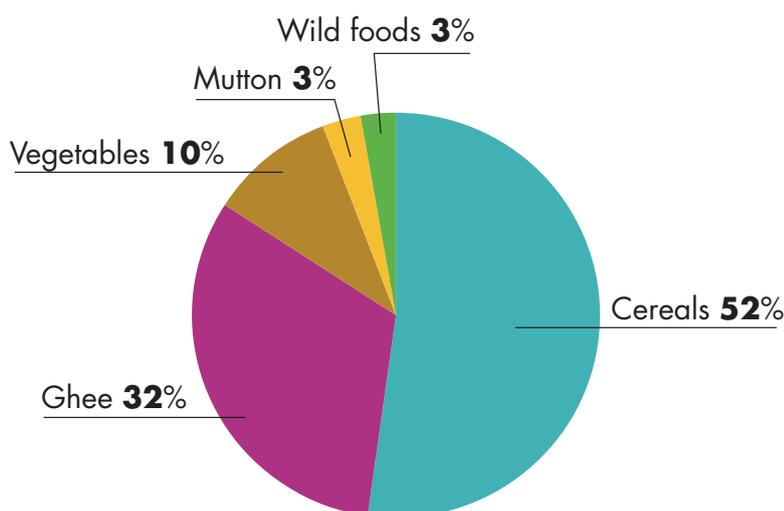
This listing translates into the following charts.

The relative contribution of various food products to diets of food secure and food insecure households

Food secure



Food insecure



Note that the food secure households in this example have been eating from eight food groups, compared with only five food groups amongst the food insecure.

The results expressed in percentages represent the numbers of helpings, rather than actual quantities consumed. Therefore, you cannot conclude that food insecure households eat more cereals than food secure households (even though they consume 16 helpings compared with 14). What you can conclude is that cereals make up a larger proportion of the overall food intake of the food insecure households (since they are eaten more often). This is not surprising, as cereals are usually the cheapest bulk commodity.

If you collect this information for different livelihood groups instead of wealth groups, you may detect foodstuffs which are particular to one group for cultural reasons, or you may detect foods that are unavailable or unaffordable for certain groups of people.

Annex 6

How to do pair-wise ranking and year ranking

This is a good method for analysing the relative importance of different factors. Pair-wise ranking is used to overcome the difficulty people often have in ranking more than two items at a time. When asked to consider how five or six different items relate to each other, people 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 (see Reference 7).

This is a useful technique when, for example, you need information about: the community's most serious problems; the most important food sources in a given household; the relative amount of money spent on fresh food versus packaged foods; or the best or worst harvest years.

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

During your focus group meetings, ask people about the biggest problems they currently face. Tell them that they can tell you about the problems in any order, not necessarily in order of difficulty. Then 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 beds/mats and clothes; and neighbourhood crime. List the problems as shown in the table below, and ask the group which of the following it considers to be the bigger problem: food shortage or lack of access to healthcare. You are now making problem pairs and asking them to rank which item in a given pair is more severe. This is why the process is called "pair-wise ranking".

If the group responds that food shortage is the greater problem, insert this answer (i.e. food shortage), in cell 1. Next, ask which poses the bigger problem: food shortage or poor access to drinking water. If the response is food shortage, fill in "food shortage" in cell 2. Follow the same procedure with all problems mentioned by the group, always letting them identify which of any given pair is the more serious. The eventual result may look like the following table:

Problems	Food shortage	No access to health care	Drinking water	Lack of mats, clothes	Neighbourhood 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					Neighbourhood Crime
Neighbourhood Crime					

Now you can start to rank the problems: identify those that are currently the most pressing by listing all of the problems mentioned and counting how often each one of them was selected as the bigger of two problems in any given pair. For example:

- Food shortage, chosen four times
- No access to healthcare, chosen twice
- Poor access to drinking water, chosen three times
- Lack of beds/mats, clothes, not chosen
- Neighbourhood crime, chosen once

From this list you can conclude that, in this community at the current time, food shortage is their main concern, followed by poor access to drinking water, then lack of access to healthcare, and finally crime. The fact that lack of mats and clothes has a score of zero does not mean that it is not a problem; it simply indicates that it is thought to be less severe than the other four problems.

Note: It is important to find out whether both women and men perceive the ranking of community problems in the same way. The same exercise may therefore be done in two separate groups: one made up of men only, and the other of women.

Example for year ranking

Year ranking can be used to help identify the current vulnerability status of a household compared with previous years. For example, ask members of a household about their total wage income per year, and identify those years during which they were able to make savings, invest in major items of expenditure related to their livelihood activities, or improve the quality of their housing. This should give you an overview of how their situation has changed from year to year, and an indication of whether things have become progressively worse, or perhaps progressively better. This exercise will help you to ask about the choices people are now making, during the current crisis.

For example, if your food security assessment takes place following a drought, it can be useful to know how good or bad the harvest was in previous years. This enables you to see whether communities were already struggling over a number of consecutive years or whether the present year is the first year of crisis. You can ask people to score the last four to five years in terms of good, average or bad harvests. 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, etc.

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

Year	Harvest result
2000	Good
2001	Good
2002	Good
2003	Average
2004	Bad

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

Annex 7

How to compile a timeline

The aim of a timeline is to understand the recent history of an area and its people by identifying the main events that have affected their lives. It can give an indication of the relative severity of the current period of food insecurity, and whether it has the same causes as previous similar crises. The timeline can be used with groups of people or with individuals if you 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 between these important events, showing other significant occurrences in the community's history.
- 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 each event and its impact.

The following examples have been collected in different ways. The first is the account of one person, and the second a compilation of various individual accounts. Note that the timeline is a tool to help you to understand how the current situation compares with that in the past, and to learn how people overcame problems. A timeline is therefore a useful exploratory tool.

Example from Nicaragua

Garobo Empinado community, Nicaragua

Key-informant: 82 year-old woman

Date	Period	Commentary on living standards
1930	Conservative era	I ate well then because my husband worked and things were much cheaper. Today he is no longer with us, and my children cannot find work and our harvests are no good.
1960s	Somoza decade Beginning of the cotton growing era	This was a difficult time. I ate badly then because I had a very young family and we had little land to grow food on. But we grew maize and sometimes wheat, so we could not complain. Some families left the village to look for work in the cotton growing areas. Then the cotton seeds came to our very own village. We also started to grow cotton on our land and we were always able to pay back our loan to the bank in time for the next loan, that would let us buy seeds for planting in April just before the rainy season. Things improved for most of us in this community.
1979	War of independence	War only brought hunger and misery and we lost everything. I lost my husband.
1998	El Nino and hurricane Mitch effects	This is when there was a sharp downturn and I hear the foreign exchange rate became unfavourable for us. Not only that, but the weather turned against us too and the winter planting season turned sour, washing everything away. Government officials only made empty promises and there were no more loans to buy agricultural inputs.
2001	Prolonged drought	My sons decided to sell our land and they left for the city to work in the factories. Just as well, because it has been drought after drought these past years. I see my nephews losing their crops season after season. I am old now and need very little to live on. I have these chickens to keep me company and I don't need to worry about where to get my maize and beans because my sons visit. But what about my nephews? Who will feed their children?

Example from Somalia

Source: Prepared by the Food Security Assessment Unit and Save the Children for Somalia, April 2000.
<http://www.fsasomali.org/uploads/Other/260.pdf>

Timeline

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

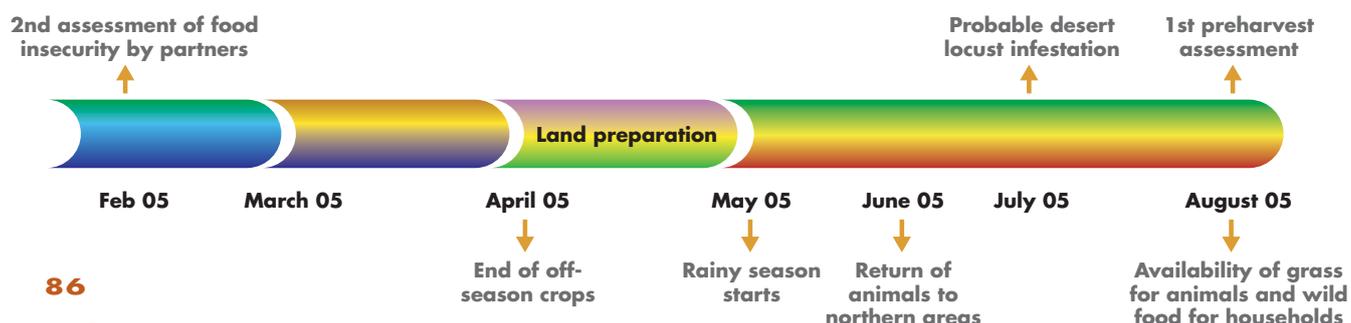
Example from Niger

You can also make a timeline of a much shorter period showing critical events, as shown in the below example, from Niger. This can help you understand which events people feel have had most impact on them, and why.

Source: FEWSNET. 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 the roles of men and of women; how different members of the community spend their time; if children are significant participants in essential activities; how much time is spent acquiring food; and ways in which the situation is evolving.

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

By comparing current daily schedules with previous ones, you can identify trends. For example, if people are now walking two 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 that 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 the exercise separately with the 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 may also ask participants about an average two to three day period, since certain significant activities may not take place daily, but rather several times each week.

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

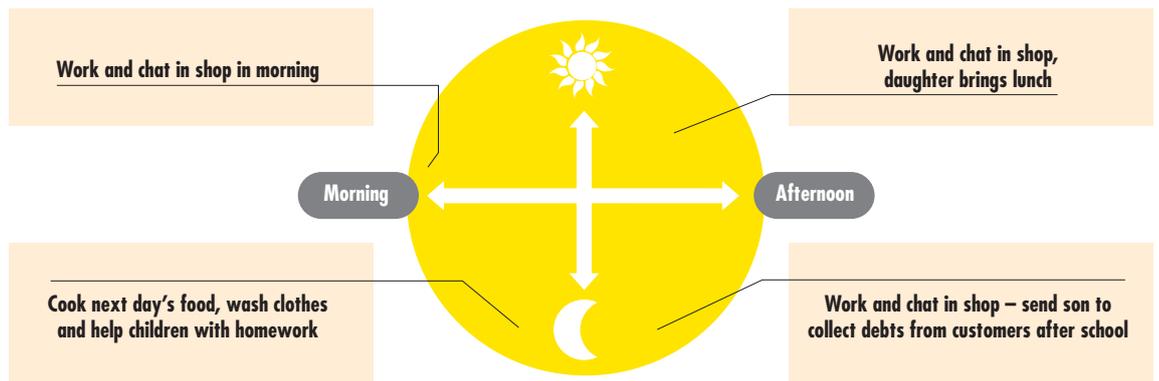
The following day, one-third of the women go to market or sell firewood by the road for the whole day.

This example illustrates that many women are at present heavily engaged in collecting wild foods and that this, together with collecting firewood, takes a large part of their time. 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.

Example of an 18 hour clock activity calendar for different livelihood groups in coastal communities of southern Sri Lanka affected by the 2004 tsunami

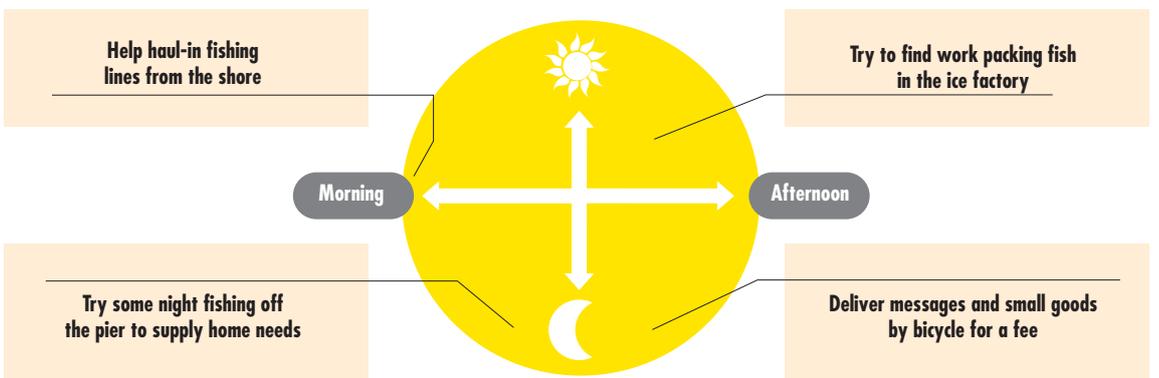
This example depicts a day in the lives of different men and women a few weeks after the 2004 tsunami struck and disrupted their lives. Each person was asked to describe how they spent “yesterday”. The clock is a rough representation of the hours during which the person is awake and engaged in activities.

Case 1. Tsunami widow running a shop selling plastic and metal household goods



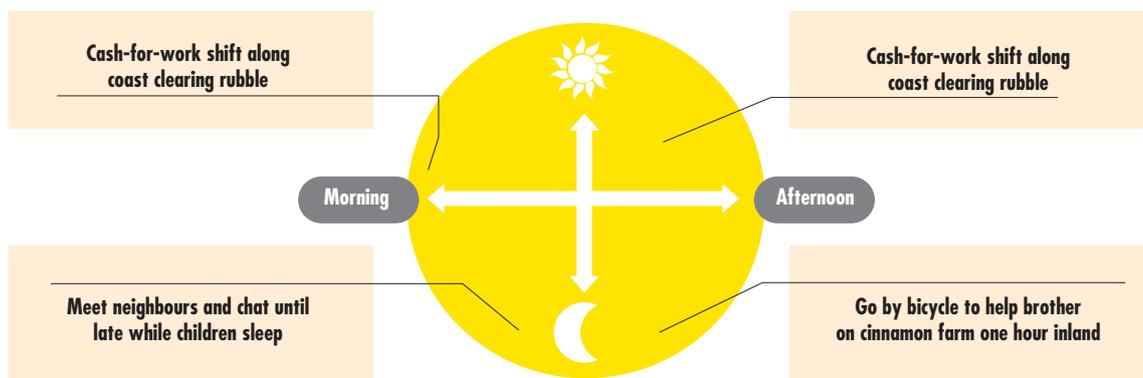
This simple clock depicts the structure of her day and allows you to ask her how business is, who buys from her shop, who has the most debts, etc. Her family status as a recent widow may mean that she is now tied to the shop for long hours and that other tasks are left to her children. In this case, it would be useful to check how different her days are now compared with before the tsunami, and to determine if she can make ends meet and provide for her family through the shop.

Case 2. Cooperative fisherman who lost his boat in the tsunami



This clock depicts the structure of his day away from home, looking for odd jobs because he is no longer able to go out to sea for two to three days at a time with the fishing fleet. The loss of the boat has clearly changed his daily routine. The information in the diagram offers an opportunity to explore the amount he needs to earn per day to feed his family, and what other income sources are available to him. In this case, it would be useful to ask about future prospects and job opportunities.

Case 3. An unemployed male, currently a day labourer on an NGO-run cash-for-work rubble-clearing programme



This clock depicts the daily activity structure of a man who has found employment and is receiving wages. You can probe to see if the work on his brother's farm is paid or not and, in this case, it would be good to ask about future prospects – taking into account that he was unemployed before the tsunami. His family situation and income options are not clear from this clock.

We have seen three very different scenarios. Creating such 18 hour clocks are a quick way for you to understand:

- how busy different people are;
- when they are busiest, and therefore unlikely to attend any activities that you are planning;
- what options they have to ensure their food security;
- whether many people share similar daily activity patterns;
- whether this way of coping on a day-to-day basis puts households at risk of food insecurity.

Use this tool in communities with very varied livelihood activities. It is especially useful in urban areas and with different age groups.

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 due to a crisis (for example, drought, damage to food stores, crop failure due to insect infestation, animal disease outbreaks, or obstacles to transport of goods). When you find that prices are abnormally high or low for a given product, you should go into greater detail to determine the causes. A price analysis is a useful tool for diagnosing severe problems. It is worth trying to determine annual prices from secondary sources combined with primary sources (i.e. via focus groups, 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 disrupting planting and leading to 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 steep price changes. Some commodities have increased in price compared to last year, but it is possible that this was expected or normal. Some prices have decreased.

Since livestock prices are decreasing, it is important for your food security assessment to determine whether livestock keepers are de-stocking or selling their animals. Why might they be doing this? You will need to verify whether this is a normal situation or whether people are selling livestock in order to obtain cash because grain prices are expected to increase significantly.

Example 3: Results of price comparison in various towns in Toledo District, Belize in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Iris

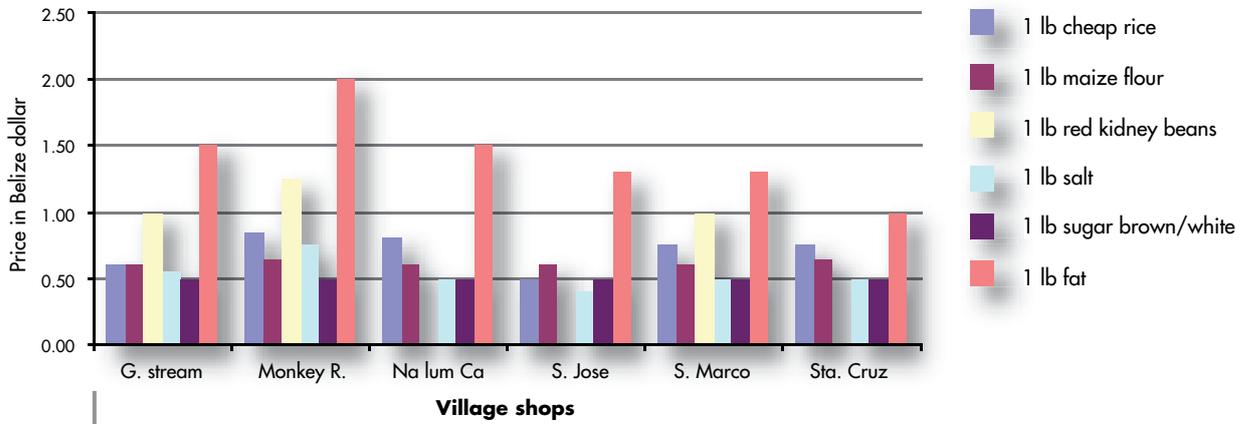
This example shows the prices for food and non-food commodities in seven locations affected by the hurricane. The commodities were chosen after interviewing key-informants regarding the types of goods people needed, and by looking at what was available in local shops.

It emerges that prices are fairly stable for food, but not so for other products. This is an interesting finding, as is the fact that some goods cannot be found at all (when the price is zero, it means the product is not available). Price fluctuations are usually linked to availability and purchasing power. Variations therefore need to be explored further, in order to determine whether prices are likely to remain stable, whether they will change as soon roads in the district are re-opened, or whether they will continue to be volatile due to the uncertain post-hurricane environment. Do not forget that the arrival of relief goods will affect prices as well.

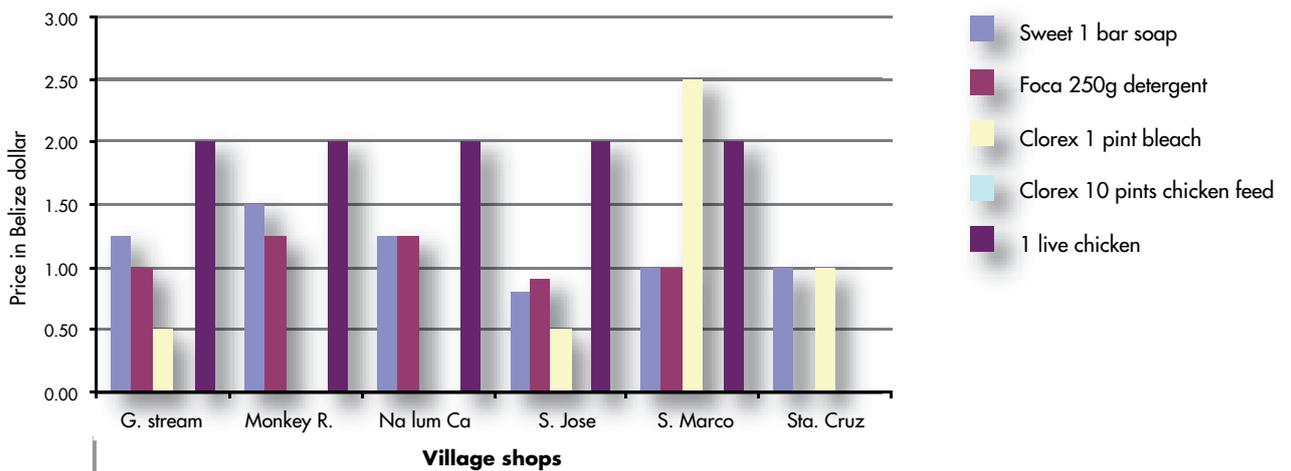
	Average cost
1 lb cheap rice	0.71
1 lb maize flour	0.62
1 lb red kidney beans	0.54
1 lb salt	0.53
1 lb sugar brown/white	0.50
1 lb fat	1.43
1 bar soap	1.13
250g detergent	0.90
1 pint bleach	0.75
10 pints chicken feed	0.00
1 live chicken	1.67

Prices for basic commodities in six towns in Toledo District, Belize

Price comparisons for basic food commodities



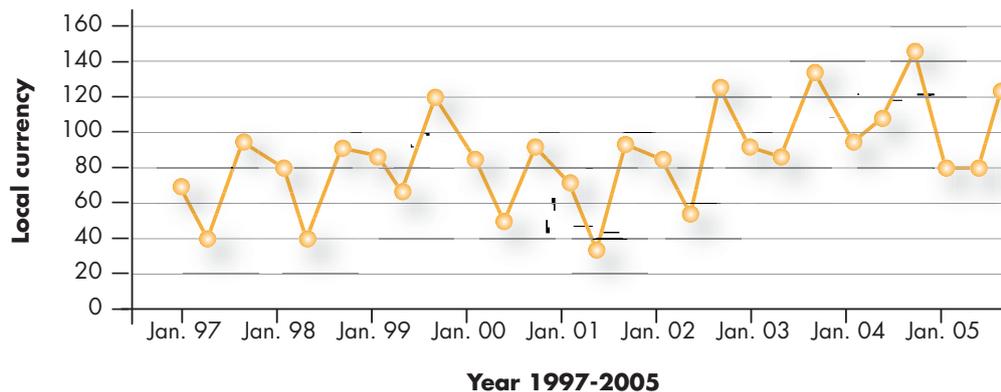
Price comparisons for basic non-food commodities



The charts show retail prices only. You may wish to talk to retailers about wholesale prices and terms of credit.

Example 4: Based on secondary data, it is sometimes possible to draw a graph showing price trends over several years, thus allowing you to compare prices from your own assessment with this baseline information. The following graph shows an upward trend in prices in 2004 and 2005.

Price of maize (per kilogram)



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

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 at any time 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.