



Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Exercise in Tajikistan

August-September 2009

- Final Activity Report -

Executive Summary

The 2009 IPC Exercise in Tajikistan has brought together representatives of the Government, NGOs and UN Agencies who have jointly analyzed the food security situation in the country. Through a participatory process, they have used secondary data and available evidence to assign each area (cluster of districts) with a corresponding phase (from Phase 1 “generally food secure” to Phase 5 “humanitarian catastrophe/famine”) which reflects the severity of the situation in terms of food insecurity. This analysis was done on the basis of technical consensus by using the IPC tools to ensure rigor and transparency in the process. Analysis templates presenting the evidence used as a basis for classification are available for external peer review. Key aspects of this exercise include:

- IPC National Analysis was conducted in a participatory manner. Food security stakeholders in the country were involved at every stage of the process.
- The IPC Analysis offers a useful means of geographical disaggregation (clusters of districts)
- The IPC tools were adapted to the specific context of Tajikistan while adhering to the global IPC standards to the extent possible
- An IPC bottom-up participatory approach was field-tested during a regional workshop in Gharm (DDR Region) which generated interest from local stakeholders who decided to conduct local IPC analysis on a quarterly basis.

Background

The IPC (Integrated food security phase classification - www.ipcinfo.org) is a standardized tool that aims at providing a “common currency” for classifying the severity of a food security situation. To date, the IPC has been piloted or being increasingly introduced in a total of 15 countries in the Great Horn of Africa, West and Southern Africa and Southern Asia. An additional 13 national governments have been introduced to the IPC through training events and workshops.

In Tajikistan, a pilot IPC exercise was conducted by WFP and the Tajikistan Food Coordination Forum (funded by ECHO) between June and December 2007. As a result, various products including an IPC situation analysis map were released in April 2008.

The WFP Tajikistan Country Office requested support from Rome OMXF to capitalize on the experience accumulated since the 2007 pilot exercise in order to support further development of the IPC in Tajikistan. A two months project was launched in August-September 2009 with the following objectives:

1. Enhanced consultation at national level and pilot test consultation at regional level;
2. Review and update the IPC situation analysis map in order to monitor changes of the situation since April 2008; and
3. Improve targeting and sampling of the FSMS by using IPC classification and consensus-building process to provide a district level phase classification that subsequently can easily be updated by using a standardized methodology and helps identifying the most at-risk district within each of the 19 zones of the FSMS.

Guiding principles

Considering the lessons learnt from the 2007 IPC Pilot in Tajikistan, it was decided that the IPC process would be conducted in the respect of three main guiding principles:

- The process should be highly participatory including the government
- The IPC tools needs to be adapted to the specific context of Tajikistan while adhering to the global IPC standards to the extent possible
- An analysis which would be limited to the regional level would be of little use for decision making as it would not provide a sufficient level of details for proper needs identification. The ecological zoning approach used by the IPC pilot could be refined to better reflect the complex reality of socio-ecosystems in Tajikistan.

Implementation plan

The IPC process was implemented by following seven steps as presented in the table below.

Steps	Objectives	Milestones	Event/Dates	Output documents
1	Review, analyze and compile relevant secondary data	<i>Data sheet produced</i>	Consultant (August 5 th – August 20 th)	- Data Sheet 9.2
2	Collectively review and adapt the methodology to be used for the IPC analysis	<i>Technical consensus over methodology (indicators and spatial level of analysis)</i>	IPC Methodological Workshop (August 28 th 2009)	- Proceedings of the methodological workshop - Adapted reference table - List of clustered districts and maps
3	Organize and evaluate evidence for participatory FS analysis	<i>IPC analysis templates are pre-filled</i>	Consultant and Ad-hoc technical Working Group Meetings (August 29 th – September 11 th)	- 22 completed analysis templates (one for each cluster of districts)
4	Conduct participatory IPC analysis based on pre-filled templates	<i>National IPC analysis is conducted on the basis of technical consensus</i>	IPC National Workshop in Dushanbe (September 11 th 2009)	- Proceedings of the IPC national workshop - IPC classification
5	Test bottom-up participatory IPC model and submit classification to the regional level	<i>Regional pilot is conducted</i>	IPC Regional Workshop in Gharm (September 15 th 2009)	- Proceedings of the IPC regional workshop
6	Produce final IPC map and executive brief	<i>IPC Map and executive brief are produced</i>	October 2009	- IPC map - IPC executive brief
7	Communicate results	<i>Results are communicated to key stakeholders</i>	October 2009	Report from the Tajikistan Country Office

The report will follow this plan to present each implemented activity, its outputs, the lessons learnt and questions raised.

I. Secondary data review

Description of the activity

A thorough review of the available secondary data was carried out in order to provide elements for the IPC meta-analysis. The sources used to that effect are listed in Annex A (Bibliography of the sources used for the IPC analysis) Those reports were scanned for relevant data which was later extracted, re-encoded when necessary and compiled in a data sheet. The last version (9.2) is available as an electronic annex B. It contains more than 150 indicators partly disaggregated at the District level.

Output

- Data Sheet 9.2 with 150 indicators partly disaggregated at the District level

Lessons learnt

A data gap analysis was conducted to assess the feasibility of carrying out an IPC analysis at the District level. Key results are presented in the matrix below.

Gap/Problem identified	Potential consequence for the IPC Analysis	Solution implemented
- There is very little data available at the sub-regional level for an IPC analysis in Tajikistan (language barriers and administrative filters between local and national level)	IPC analysis at the District level may not be feasible because of insufficient data available	Cluster districts that share similar food security situations so as to use data from other districts as alternative sources
- Most data available at the sub-regional level has limited statistical validity as it relies on a low number of households	The results of the IPC analysis could have little validity	Use multiple sources for triangulation and increased validity
- Situation varies greatly between Jamoats/Districts/Provinces	The results of the IPC could have little geographical precision therefore little use for decision makers	Cross-check results of the national IPC during a regional workshop and use qualitative approach

Areas for improvement

The IPC analysis relies heavily on the quality of the secondary data available as well as on the level of disaggregation for this data. Without a sufficient level of geographical detail in the analysis, the IPC may be of little use for decision makers.

Recommendations

1. Further guidance could be formulated at the global level on the level of disaggregation to be chosen for an IPC analysis to ensure utility of the results for decision makers.
2. Triangulation can increase validity of the IPC analysis. Local stakeholders at the sub-regional level can be involved in the IPC process to offer alternative sources of information.

II. Participatory review and adaptation of the IPC tools to the specific context of Tajikistan

Description of the activity

Organizations which had been declared as part of the “IPC Technical Working Group” during the 2007 IPC Pilot were invited to participate in a one-day methodological workshop on August 28th 2009. These included: Mission East, Oxfam, Save the Children, WHO, ECHO, UNICEF, Mercy Corps, FAO, UNDP and WFP. While it was initially planned to invite members of the Government, logistical constraints (mainly language barriers) led organizers to limit invitations to the members of the technical working group. Detailed account of the workshop is available in annex (Annex C: Proceedings of the IPC Tajikistan methodological workshop August 2009).

Outputs

- IPC reference table adapted to the context of Tajikistan (10 proxy indicators with thresholds for each IPC phase)
- Identification of cluster of districts sharing similar food security situations (proximity of the socio-ecosystems) and to be used as the geographical level for the IPC analysis

Main lessons learnt

The participatory process led to the definition of reference table adapted to the Tajik context and to the definition of the most appropriate unit of analysis (clusters of districts).

Areas for improvement

1. There needs to be clarity on the limits of potential adaptation / standardization at the national level:
 - Tajik Reference Table does not include Key Reference Outcomes of the IPC global standard table: mortality, water, health, livelihood assets, and structural issues.
 - Tajik Reference Table narrows the choice of proxies to support the classification of Key Reference Outcomes as compared to the standard one.
 - Hazards are defined in a way that have nothing to do with the likelihood of them happening as it is done in the standard table (i.e. Hazard is included as a main reference outcome in the Tajik Reference Table whereas in the standard Key Reference Outcome table, it was dropped out).
2. During the IPC National Workshop a number of suggestions for improvement were formulated with regard to the Reference Table adapted to Tajikistan and the clusters of districts:
 - The indicator of irrigated surface for food availability is considered as not completely adequate. The thresholds used are incorrect (they reflect a surface per capita that is not realistic).
 - The food basket used to monitor market prices lacks some items (e.g. rice should be included in rice in rice producing regions) and should not only contain food stuff but other types of basic items.
 - The reference level for market prices corresponds to a period when prices have been exceptionally high (high food and fuel prices crisis). It was suggested to use an average based on the last five years instead of the last two years.
 - The way in which hazards has been defined addresses more the question of food availability. What does “manageable damages” mean? Need to indicate more specific examples.
 - The concept of “non-productive assets” should be precisely defined in the coping outcome (e.g. cars can be considered as productive assets in Tajikistan).
 - Changes were suggested with regard to the clusters of districts.
 - Istaravshan in Sughd should be considered as an independent cluster
 - Mastchoh and Asht districts in Sughd should be treated as two different clusters
 - The Ishkoshim district in Gbao region was proposed as a separate cluster by the Government which claimed that there are pockets of food insecurity. But there was not sufficient evidence as they were referring to a joint assessment with FAO whose report was not yet circulated.

Recommendations

1. It is suggested that the question be brought up to the global level and guidelines/limits for potential national adaptations drafted.
2. It is recommended that the IPC technical working group in Tajikistan should review the adapted IPC tools based on suggestions from participants.

III. Organization and review of evidence

Description of the activity

Informal IPC working group meetings were initially planned to collectively work on the review and organization of evidence. The objective was to pre-fill 22 analysis templates (one for every cluster of districts) while associating stakeholders in every step of the IPC analysis process. Although participants demonstrated a lot of commitment with the IPC exercise, it appeared that the organization of two one-day workshops over a period of two weeks left them with little spare time available on top of their regular activities. The consultant pre-filled the IPC analysis templates with the support of representatives from WFP and UNDP (Annex D).

Outputs

Twenty two IPC analysis templates pre-filled with relevant evidence (one for each cluster)

Main lessons learnt

IPC analysis templates can be pre-filled to speed up the process of the actual IPC analysis during the IPC national workshop. Stakeholders should have the guarantee that all available data has been reviewed and recorded (provision of the data sheet).

Areas for improvement

Any participatory process is inherently limited by the amount of time which can be allocated by participants on top of their regular activities.

Recommendations

1. IPC national exercises should be planned in advance so that sufficient time can be allocated for participants to actively engage in the participatory process. Working sessions could be organized out of town to capture participants' full attention and time.

IV. IPC Analysis

Description of the activity

The IPC National Workshop for Tajikistan was organized on September 11th 2009. It gathered a wide range of actors from the Food Security Community including nine officials from the Government. After having been introduced to the IPC tools, participants were divided into four working groups (one for every region). Each group used the results of the secondary data review to conduct a meta-analysis. Analysis template for each cluster of districts had been pre-filled with relevant evidence (key reference outcomes and proxy indicators). Participants reviewed the evidence and engaged into participatory analysis using the adapted reference tables. Considering the threshold levels for the ten proxy indicators, they assigned a food security phase (1 to 5) for each cluster of districts. Later on, each group submitted its classification to peer review during a plenary session. Discussions allowed for technical consensus to develop. Final results of the integrated food security phase classification are presented in annex.

This workshop also represented a rare opportunity for actors from the government, the UN agencies and NGOs to meet and discuss about the food security situation in Tajikistan. Discussions were held in an open and frank manner. Key points of the discussions are presented below.

- Participants from the Government who had not been previously introduced to the IPC found the introductory session too brief and regretted that a separate IPC awareness raising event had not been organized prior to the National Workshop.
- Participants from different ministries expressed interest in the IPC tools highlighting the fact that they are easy to use while retaining sufficient scientific criteria for a rigorous analysis.
- Participants from different ministries expressed their concern with the fact that the IPC tools and relevant literature are not available in the Russian language. For the sake of this workshop a brief presentation document of the IPC had been translated into Russian and was distributed to participants along with a description of the five Phases and a translated version of the adapted IPC reference table. Representatives of the global IPC group indicated possible support for Russian translation of the necessary material in the future.
- Participants from different ministries asked clarifications for which ministry should take the lead with regard to the IPC process in Tajikistan. Members of the government proposed that a clear institutional set-up should be devised for them to be involved within the IPC process.
- Several participants requested further modifications in the adapted reference table (e.g. the Indicator on available arable land per capita was particularly criticized) as well as with the clustering of districts. Representatives from WFP Tajikistan took note of the suggested changes and will work on possible modifications together with key stakeholders.

- One participant requested further clarifications on the terminology regarding “dietary diversity”, “non productive assets” and “manageable damages”. Next version of the adapted reference table should provide definition for those terms.
- Participants identified severe gaps with regard to the data currently available for food security monitoring purposes:
 - Most data is only available at the Regional level which does not support decision makers. More data should be collected at the District level.
 - There is little nutrition data available except for the regular Food Security Monitoring Security (FSMS) Bulletin jointly done by WFP/WHO. The last large-scale assessment in this domain was the 2005 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.
 - The FSMS is one of the few sources of data for the District level but relies on a very small sample which makes any interpretation difficult at the District level.
→IPC could generate synergies with regard to data collection.
- It was proposed that Goskomstat (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan) could use the IPC to analyze the food security situation within its quarterly poverty and food security bulletin. Support could be provided to train them in using the IPC tools. WFP and Goskomstat could sit together to analyze possible areas of cooperation and synergies to be developed. Both partners expressed interest in the idea.
- It was proposed that IPC classification could be made on a quarterly basis by a national food security group that would include representatives from Government, UN agencies, NGOs on the basis of the data collected by WFP/FSMS, Goskomstat and other partners.
- The example of Nepal was presented to participants where the IPC tools are used by the government, UN agencies, and NGOs to conduct joint analysis on the food security situation and where a technical consensus is reached every three months. IPC classification is done accordingly every quarter and used by decision makers within the country. Participants showed interest in the model.
- Participants were informed that a pilot IPC regional workshop would be organized in Gharm (DDR Region) on September 15th 2009 to test the possible development of regional food security forum which would support IPC classification in the future and could be potentially involved in data collection.
- Representatives from the global IPC group explained that there was a growing interest at the global level for a model application of the IPC in the context of chronic food insecurity. Given the interest of participants in using the IPC tools in Tajikistan, further support could be provided by the IPC global partnership. The idea could be explored to have Tajikistan as one of the focus country in terms of IPC development and therefore to request dedicated resources to that end.

A separate document provides detailed information on this workshop (Annex E: Proceedings of the Tajikistan IPC National Workshop September 2009)

Outputs

- IPC analysis and classification carried out for Tajikistan with a sub-regional level of analysis
- Members of government in Tajikistan are familiar with the IPC tools and have been involved in the food security situation analysis process

Main lessons learnt

1. Participatory style of the workshop (participants to engage in working group sessions) was appreciated.
2. Considering the elements below presented it appeared that Tajikistan could be envisaged as one of the future focus countries of the global initiative. The situation in Tajikistan is characterized by:
 - Strong interest in the IPC from different stakeholders (UNDP willing to set up an EW system based on the IPC; DFID and EC provided positive feedback on the IPC analytical workshop; EC supports goals and principles of the IPC and is ready to advocate with the government; and other IPC partners (Oxfam and Save The Children among others) are ready to provide support.
 - Lack of coordination among food security stakeholders (WFP produces a quarterly FSMS bulletin and the government issues its own quarterly bulletin, little participation of the governments on the National FS Technical Working Group, collaboration of the Government and the World Bank in the Tajik Living Standards Survey (TLSS) is not synchronized with other stakeholders' work)
 - Perceived lack of transparency of government's data collection process and dissemination of results.

Areas for improvement

1. Knowing that the government was not involved in the first IPC (2007) and neither in the workshop for adapting IPC to the Tajik context (August 28th, 2009) it would have been necessary to have a separate IPC awareness raising event with the government prior to the National Workshop.
2. Ministry of Health was not participating nor was WHO. As a consequence there was insufficient input from the health/nutrition sector.
3. The government is quite sensitive to any type of comparison with the African context.
4. Better planning is needed so that proper risk analysis is conducted (a separate dedicated session is necessary).
5. A clear strategy for communicating results of analysis would have been needed after the 2007 pilot.

6. There is a need for having guiding materials translated into Russian or Tajik.
7. Government showed hesitation since it was not clear what operational implications the results of the analysis would have.
8. Analysts tend to forget the part of rating the confidence of the analysis.
9. During group work the discussions tend to be monopolized by a few individuals.

Recommendation

1. To make sure that all participants in the workshop have a minimum familiarity with the IPC process and methodology
2. To ensure participation of key experts or if not possible, to get written inputs in advance
3. Considering the sensitivity of the government to any comparison with the context of Africa it is better to use Nepal case instead as a reference example (field visits to Nepal for best practice example in the region).
4. Better planning is needed so that proper risk analysis is conducted (a separate dedicated session is necessary). This should be kept in mind when allocating time in workshops (also, workshop dates should be planned to avoid Ramadan season, if possible).
5. It would be useful to include a section on how to communicate IPC results to country stakeholders in the next version of the IPC guidance (if possible in local language).
6. Consider the inclusion of budget for translation of IPC Manual and User's Guide for identified future IPC focus countries.
7. Given that IPC maps produced during the initial phase of setting up an IPC process in a country will have little operational value, the emphasis should be placed on the following:
 - The development of different modules for introducing the IPC depending on the type of audience (technical vs non technical) would allow planning for awareness raising sessions better adapted to the characteristics of the audience.
 - To consider a bottom-up approach for rolling out the IPC at country level by which the process would start at district or regional level where apparently a successful IPC would be easier to achieve than at national level due to:
 - more interest from stakeholders,
 - filtering of unreliable data through local knowledge;
 - and possible gains in terms of cost efficiency of data collection operations carried out simultaneously by various aid agencies.

8. Use of table 2.3 of user's guide should be recommended in all analysis as it encourages analysts to assign confidence scores: confidence = f (reliability scores, strength of convergence of evidence, amount of evidence)
9. It has to be clear to group facilitators that their role is also about encouraging participation of all members.
10. It could be useful to better understand how the information/maps generated are used for decision making within national ministries.

V. Regional pilot: Bottom-up participatory IPC approach

Description of the activity

An IPC regional workshop was organized in Gharm (DDR Region) on September 15th 2009. The objective was to introduce the IPC at the regional level and to evaluate the potential interest of local stakeholders in setting up a Bottom-up participatory IPC approach. A secondary objective was to submit the IPC Classification recently carried out at the national level to fine tune the results and to cross-check its validity on the field.

Participants from five districts joined the workshop. They represented various government institutions, UN agencies and NGOs. This included:

The Agriculture Department (Rasht, Tojikobod, Jirgatal, Nurobod, Tavildara); Association of Invalides (Rasht); Dehkan Farms Association (Tojikobod, Jirgatal); German Agro Action (Gharm); Global Partner (Rasht); Mercy Corps (Gharm); MSDSP (Regional Office); OSCE (Gharm); Red Crescent (Rasht); Statistics Department (Nurobod); UNDP CP AO (Gharm); WFP (HQ, Dushanbe & Rasht LO); EC - Joint Research Centre.

Participants were provided with a brief presentation of the key food security concepts and a short introduction to the IPC tools. A discussion was held on potential benefits of the IPC at the regional level. Later on, participants reviewed the IPC classification for the following districts: Rasht, Jirgatal, Tojikobod, Tavildara, Nurobod. Using the adapted reference table and a combination of secondary data provided and local knowledge, they confirmed the validity of the IPC analysis conducted at the national level. The phase classification was identical for the districts considered. Finally local stakeholders expressed great interest for the IPC tools and decided that they would meet quarterly to carry out IPC analysis for their districts.

A separate document provides detailed information on this workshop (Annex F: Proceedings of the Tajikistan IPC Regional Workshop September 2009)

Outputs

- Creation of an informal pilot Food Security Regional Forum which will meet quarterly to carry out IPC analysis for Eastern DRD (Rasht, Jirgatal, Tojikobod, Tavildara, Nurobod)
- Validation of the IPC analysis done at the national level. Local stakeholders reached the same conclusions over phase classification.

Main lessons learnt

- A core food security training session was introduced at the start of the regional workshop to accommodate participants with little or no food security background. It proved useful for the subsequent IPC analysis.
- There were several positive aspects of bringing the IPC at the sub-national level (DRD Region):
 - The IPC was perceived as highly positive and there was consensus on the need to carry-out a more in-depth IPC analysis in the coming months.
 - The regional workshop was an opportunity to identify a number of data reliability issues and to identify the existence of data unavailable at the national level.
 - There were positive exchanges on the Information produced by the FSMS and provided by workshop's participants
 - The good level of local knowledge that the workshop managed to agglutinate permitted to arrive to the same information provided by the FSMS. This suggests that this type of workshop could contribute positively to the cost-efficiency of data collection activities.

Areas for improvement

1. The analysis could have benefitted from the presence of representatives from the banks, hospitals, Statistics Department, Land Committee and environmental specialists.
2. Participants regretted that they had not been provided in advance with the workshop material (analysis templates, reference table, clustered districts). This would have allowed them to come with more relevant data.

Recommendations

1. It was suggested to invite the additional stakeholders listed above for the next meeting
2. Revised material should be shared in advance with local stakeholders so that participant may be ready with data prior to the workshop

Other specific recommendations on how to further pilot test the IPC bottom up participatory approach are formulated in a separate document. (Annex G: Recommendations on how to develop a Bottom-up Participatory Food Security Monitoring System based on the IPC tools)

Conclusion

Finalization of the IPC products (Final Map, IPC executive brief) will be concluded by October 2009 under the supervision of the WFP Tajikistan Country Office. An important advocacy effort should be subsequently geared towards members of the food security community in Tajikistan so that the interest and momentum created through this pilot can materialize into a common structure using the IPC tools as a complementary measure to the existing monitoring systems. One could foresee an ideal long-term scenario where a unique national food security monitoring system would be jointly developed on the basis of the IPC tools and operated by the Government with the support of relevant agencies. In this prospect, the question of how much resources will be allocated to the support of this process appears as a crucial factor for any further advances. In Tajikistan, where governance issues are multifaceted, any fruitful collaboration with the Government, while necessary for sustainability purposes, requires a certain level of investment and therefore human resources. Finally, the IPC regional pilot having shown interesting results, it is recommended to further test the concept and to reflect on its future potential as a full-fledged bottom-up food security monitoring system¹. Technical support could be provided by the WFP Nepal Country Office which has been developing a similar system with some success.

¹ Another IPC regional pilot will be conducted in Sughd Region in October 2009

List of annexes

Annex A: Bibliography of the sources used for the IPC analysis

Annex B: Data Sheet 9.2 (electronic)

Annex C: Proceedings of the IPC Tajikistan methodological workshop August 2009

Annex D: Completed IPC Analysis Templates for 22 clusters of districts (electronic)

Annex E: Proceedings of the Tajikistan IPC National Workshop September 2009

Annex F: Proceedings of the Tajikistan IPC Regional Workshop September 2009

Annex G: Recommendations on how to develop a Bottom-up Participatory Food Security Monitoring System based on the IPC tools