

# **Food Security and Nutrition Working Group**

## **Report on the Regional Technical Meeting on the Food Security and Nutrition Situation in the Horn of Africa**

**15-16<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

### **1. Introduction**

In an effort to increase rigor and better harmonize food security and humanitarian analysis, the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) organized a technical workshop in Nairobi on 15 and 16<sup>th</sup> June 2006. Steering committee members for this workshop were FAO, FEWS NET, and ACF.

The primary objective of the meeting was to pull together a regional 'Situation Analysis' using a common approach, but building on the unique data collection and institutional settings in each country. Given this juncture of the seasonal cycle generally throughout the region, the 'Situation Analysis' was to be a projection of the Situation looking beyond the long rainy season, and taking into consideration multiple contributing factors of food security. This date was chosen as a compromise data given the seasonal variation by country, but it was felt that it was valuable for early warning purposes. In many ways, the analysis produced an update of the food security projections following the Climate Outlook forum last March (See map in Appendix A).

Currently there is a lack of a widely accepted and commonly used mechanism for enabling comparability of food security and humanitarian situations. That said, there is one particular tool that has been developed recently that seeks to enable such analysis called the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification (IPC). The IPC is one of several recent developments that attempt to harmonize food security analysis so that it is more comparable and evidence-based. While the FSNWG has endorsed the use of the IPC as a starting point to improve analysis, this technical workshop had additional objectives to critically evaluate the utility of using a common tool for analysis in general, and of the IPC in particular, which can lead to its further development. Implicit within this was another objective to raise awareness of the tool in the region, and through taking participants through their own analyses, to train country representatives on the use of the tool.

### **2. Process and Outcomes**

#### **2.1 Process**

Under the auspices of the FSNWG, liaison people in Horn of Africa countries (Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Northern and Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea) were asked to put a country team together, composed of a spectrum of technical experts. Prior to the workshop, the teams were asked to put together a preliminary analysis, or at least to bring with them relevant data and maps. Unfortunately, Eritrea were unable to attend, but all the countries were able to put together strong teams (see participant list).

The workshop was conducted in three sections: an introductory morning aimed to bring everyone to the same level of understanding concerning the workshop objectives and the IPC tool. The main part of the workshop was done in country groups, where each developed their country-level analysis using the tool, with the assistance of the technical facilitators. Lastly, while the country analyses were being put together, a plenary discussion was held to gain feedback on the use of the tool, emphasising its usefulness, limitations and any problems participants had with using it. When ready, the regional map was projected and the discussion continued as a peer review of the regional analysis, and particularly looking at cross border issues.

## **2.2 Outcomes**

The physical products from the workshop were the country and regional maps (see Appendix), the analysis templates and statements put together by each team on the situation in their country. However, the awareness raising and training on the IPC tool were arguably more important outcomes. In the final feedback session of the workshop, participants on the whole decided that the regional map should not be circulated publicly, as some countries would need to verify data and gain endorsement from authorities in their countries. In one case (Southern Sudan) felt that their data was not complete enough to confidently classify most of the country, and they would need to go back to their colleagues to review (most of Southern Sudan is coded white for this reason).

### **3. Main points of Feedback from Participants** (see Appendix B for details)

#### **3.1 Technical**

- IPC/outcome indicators can usefully complement and strengthen existing systems that rely on process indicators for early warning, and assessments. [Kenya and Ethiopia]
- IPC/outcome indicators have recognised thresholds, and there is added value in the system being comparable within a country and between countries across the region [Kenya, Ethiopia, N Sudan]
- It is not easy to collect the optimal amount of data required to provide a full spectrum of indicators. Some indicators required specific surveys (nutrition and mortality), and capacity building would be needed. Good coordination could bring more partners into the process and help collect the data. [Kenya, Sudan, Somalia].
- Outcome indicators are more useful at the severe (red) end of the spectrum, and are less sensitive at the less severe (green) end. More work to develop the less severe end, such as including a 'acute food insecure' category after the 'generally food secure' may help [Tanzania and S Sudan].
- Other discussions suggested expanding the 'chronic food insecurity' category, and develop a vulnerability map based on underlying conditions.

### **3.2 Institutional**

- The IPC needs to be rooted in each country in order to take off, and for reasons of endorsement. This will require training at the country level, including a wide range of stakeholders (ie not just the food security analysts). One body should coordinate country level development of the IPC (ideally FAO). Some countries would require special training (eg Tz on mapping).
- Strong coordination systems in-country improves the potential for the IPC to be developed and for the required data to be collected by a variety of partners all working together within the IPC framework.
- Where appropriate, strong government leadership and commitment is important.

### **4. Observations from the Steering Committee/ Facilitation Team**

- Firstly, in terms of organisation, the meeting was successfully managed under the FSNWG and a smaller steering committee composed of FAO, FEWSNet and ACF. The Steering Committee reported to the FSNWG several times during the run up to the meeting and gained inputs and endorsements on key issues. In particular, the partnership and co-sponsoring of the event by FAO and FEWSNet was positive, and should be built on for future regional analyses.
- While the final product could not be disseminated, the process enabled strong technical dialogue that was made possible by the use of a common analytical tool. It was also encouraging that in the crisis areas of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, each country arrived at the same classification along the borders independently.
- It was fully acknowledged that in future the process needs to start in each country with a strong analysis that can be brought to the regional level. This is important for two main reasons: to achieve a detailed analysis within each country, drawing upon stakeholders and a wider spectrum of data; and secondly, to enable each country to verify information and obtain endorsement before they input analysis at the regional level.

### **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 5.1 The meeting was successful as an awareness raising and training exercise, but the tool needs to be developed in each country. There is general agreement concerning the usefulness and added value of the IPC (with the possible exception of S Sudan). Participants understood the compatibility of the IPC with existing early warning systems, and the potential for IPC/outcome indicators with recognised thresholds strengthening existing systems based on process indicators, and the ability to compare analysis within and between countries. There is, however, concern over the collection of data, and the work/resources this would entail. Good coordination systems and government leadership/commitment could resolve this to some extent through bringing partners together under the IPC framework. Overall, there is a great deal of interest in applying the tool at the country and regional levels.

- 5.2 Participants generally recognised the added value of the IPC tool, particularly as a complement to existing systems in each country, the value of having outcome indicators with recognised thresholds.
- 5.3 Most participants agreed that for the IPC to move forward, it needs to be firmly rooted in each country. This, in most cases, would require training at the country level, including decision makers (at least in the concepts) as well as partners involved in data collection and analysis. It is recommended that a strategy be developed at the regional level to build awareness and conduct in-depth training for the participating countries. Strong technical support would also be required during analysis in each country, at least for the first time. This strategy should be developed under the guidance of the FSNWG, and resourced in terms of funding and technical/human capacity.
- 5.4 The meeting clearly showed that there are opportunities to develop the IPC tool. More work to make the less severe end of the classification system more sensitive would be valued. There is also great potential to expand chronic food insecurity to better analyse underlying levels of vulnerability. This could also be mapped alongside the regular IPC categories of acute food insecurity. Further developments could include hazard mapping, and compiling/generating livelihood zone maps for each country and the region.