

## Update on the IPC Online Global Forum

The Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification (IPC) is an innovative set of tools (including a reference system and supporting protocols) for improving food security and humanitarian situation analysis, highlighted in issue 28 of Field Exchange<sup>1</sup>. Although originally developed for Somalia through the Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU), the FAO and strategic partners are now developing it at the global level.

Major agencies, organisations, NGO's, academic and research institutions engaged in food security and humanitarian work have now recognised the value of the IPC framework for reaching technical consensus and issuing a clear statement about the severity of a crisis and assessing implications for humanitarian response. In this context, the IPC Online Global Forum was set-up to foster dialogue on technical and institutional issues among a widely dispersed group of participants, including food security experts from FAO, WFP, OCHA, WHO, FEWSNET, FSAU, ODI, DFID, the EC, USAID<sup>2</sup>, Save the Children UK, Oxfam, Tufts University and many more. Participants examined key technical issues with the immediate aim of revising the current IPC manual, but with the longer term objective of seeing how they can work together in its future development and

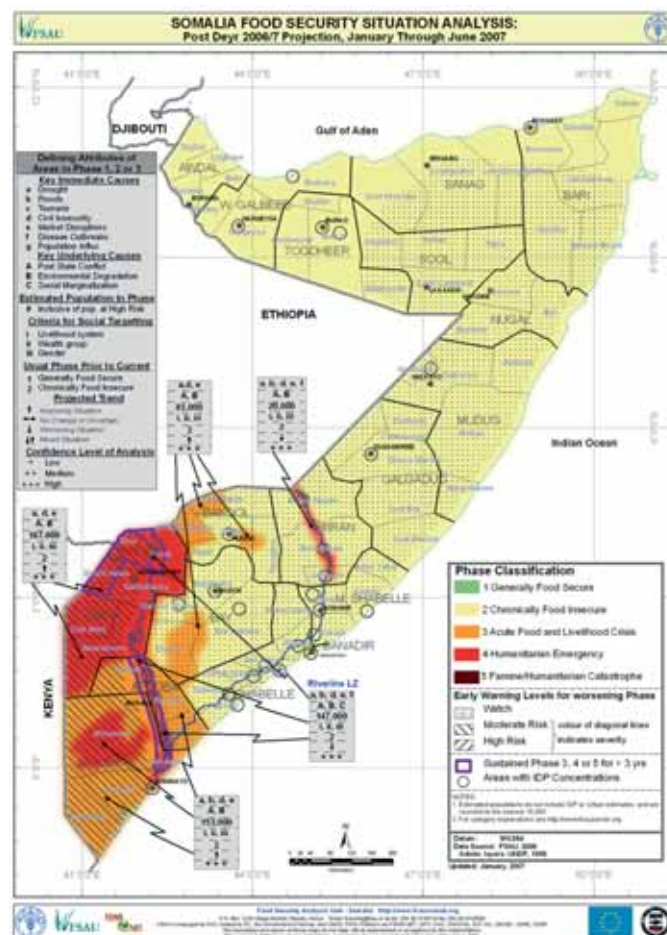
roll-out. Another objective of the IPC Online Global Forum was to create an online community of experts who could support using the IPC in several pilot countries.

The IPC Online Global Forum took place between 14 February 2007 and 16 March 2007. Discussions included:

- Overall Purpose and Limitations of the IPC
- IPC Phase Classifications and Early Warning Levels
- Reference Outcome Indicators
- Strategic Response Framework
- Communicating IPC Analysis with Maps and Population Tables
- IPC Process of Analysis
- Institutional Aspects and Implications for Future Development and Roll-out

The discussions were introduced and led by leading food security and humanitarian experts including Gary Eilerts from FEWSNET, Cindy Holleman from FSAU, Wolfgang Herbing and Joyce Luma from WFP, Chris Leather from Oxfam, Dan Maxwell and Peter Walker from Tufts University, and Paul Harvey from the ODI. Discussions were then summarised in synthesis reports that identified priorities for moving forward with the technical development of the IPC and institutional implications.

A workshop report including discussion summaries, key findings and next



steps will soon be published. Key issues that arose during the online forum will be discussed and consolidated in a face to face meeting among technical partners that will take place in Rome from March 21 –22, 2007.

For further information, contact:

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<sup>1</sup> See news piece, Field Exchange, issue 28

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations for World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Health Organisation (WHO), Food Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission (EC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

## Nutrition in Emergencies short course



A five day course in Nutrition in Emergencies is being run by the Centre for Public Health Nutrition, University of Westminster, London, UK.

The short course provides participants with technical knowledge and up-to-date information regarding delivering nutritional support to those affected by humanitarian emergencies. The course topics include food security, malnutrition, supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes and other interventions.

The course aims to give participants an overview of nutrition in humanitarian emergencies, including the type of malnutrition, direct and underlying causes, how they are assessed, and common nutritional interventions.

Participants are drawn from a range of backgrounds although the course is particularly aimed at nutritionists, doctors, nurses and programme managers who work in developing countries.

The course is run by the University of Westminster in collaboration with NutritionWorks and costs £520 sterling.

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## New WHO growth standards: more harm than good?

### Summary of published letter<sup>1</sup>

A recent letter in the LANCET questions whether the new WHO growth standards<sup>2</sup>, reported in issue 28 of Field Exchange, may do more harm than good. The authors argue that most mothers and health professionals are concerned about their infant's growth, particularly for the first six months. If they believe their infants are not growing adequately, they are more likely to introduce supplementary foods, including 'top ups' with infant formula or even switching to formula completely. It is further argued that 'insufficient milk' is the most common reason for the early cessation of breastfeeding and mothers often self-diagnose this on the basis of perceived slower growth.

The new WHO growth standards show the maximum growth rates that can be achieved with breastfeeding under optimum conditions. But, for the first six months of life, the new WHO growth standard weights,

for boys and girls, are heavier than those produced by the NCHS (National Centre for Health Statistics) for every Z score from -3 to +3. The difference is greater for weights below the mean, and it is in this region of the chart that mothers are more likely to be anxious about the growth of their infants.

The authors state that the new WHO growth standards are a triumph of modern statistical technique but go on to ask whether the real purpose has been lost in technology. They conclude that what is really needed is a growth reference that presents growth rates that can be realistically achieved during the first six months of life, and maximises the duration of exclusive breastfeeding.

<sup>1</sup> Binns. C and Lee.M (2006). Will the new WHO growth references do more harm than good? The Lancet, volume 368, Nov 2006  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.who.int/childgrowth/en/>