IPC

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions

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Understanding the IPC: Q&A

What is the IPC?

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is essentially two things: (1) a standardized scale of food insecurity; and (2) a process for building technical consensus. The IPC phases are determined by analyzing a wide range of outcomes based on international standards including food consumption levels, livelihoods, malnutrition, and mortality.

These are triangulated with evidence on contributing factors such as market prices, income levels, crop and livestock production, rainfall, and many others. The IPC classification is based on a convergence of all this evidence. The IPC is like a thermometer that tells you the 'temperature' of how bad a food security situation is. But it is more than just the temperature – just like water can change states from solid ice to liquid to gas as the temperature rises, the IPC indicates the changing phases of a food insecurity situation.

- *A process for building **evidence-based** technical consensus among key stakeholders*
- *An approach that consolidate **wide-ranging evidence***
- *A path to provide **actionable knowledge** for strategic **decision making***
- *A platform to ensure rigorous, neutral analysis*

What are the origins of the IPC?

The IPC was developed in February 2004 by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU), which is managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Somalia. The demand for a food security measurement tool was driven by an increasing need for rigour and relevance of evidence-based and actionable food security information to facilitate an effective humanitarian response in the context of Somalia. In the years that followed, there were strong indications that the IPC was relevant on a wider scale, as it served as a "common currency" for food security and nutrition analysis.

Since its founding in 2004, the IPC has grown significantly in global partnerships, relevance and coverage. Its global partnership has grown to 15 organizations with the recent entry of UNICEF, the Global Nutrition Cluster and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and its coverage has grown to around 35 countries. In the last ten years, it was the IPC's analytical capacity that brought the two major Famines (in Somalia and South Sudan) to the world's attention, and informed funding and response decisions.

Which organisations make the IPC global partnership?

The IPC global partnerships comprises 15 organizations and inter-governmental institutions including: Action Against Hunger (AAH), CARE International, Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte Contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) (CILSS), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the Global Food Security Cluster, the Global Nutrition Cluster, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Save the Children, Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana [Central American Integration System] (SICA), World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). See annex 2 IPC Global Partnership Governance Structure.

What is the role of the IPC Steering Committee?

The IPC Global Steering Committee is the governing body of the initiative, tasked with strategically guiding and positioning the IPC globally and linking with relevant initiatives. It has the following responsibilities: positioning the IPC in broader, international framework of food and nutrition security initiatives, promoting institutionalisation within partner agencies, overseeing the management IPC Global Strategic Programme, providing strategic guidance, ensuring global coherence and respect of IPC principles, and endorsing the IPC technical approaches, tools and guidelines. The IPC Global Steering Committee members endorse and commit to the IPC Guiding Principles for Operating within the Framework of Common Interagency Approach and agree to abide by these principals of operation.

What is the IPC Analysis Cycle?

The IPC Analysis Cycle includes four inter-linked stages that need to be followed for each IPC analysis in order to produce high-quality products and effectively communicate results: Plan, prepare, analyse and communicate, and learn. An analysis cycle, excluding planning and lessons learning, usually takes between one and three months.

Whats is "acute food insecurity" and "acute malnutrition"?

Acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition are any manifestation of food insecurity and malnutrition found in a specified area at a specific point in time, of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration.

How is the decision made to attribute a specific IPC Phase to a given area?

Countries classify and map acute food insecurity situations within geographical areas - defined according to the national administrative divisions (e.g. provinces, prefectures, counties etc.) or livelihood zones - and the proportion of affected households within those areas. Each area is attributed a food insecurity "Phase" (ranging from IPC Phase 1 corresponding to minimal acute food insecurity to IPC Phase 5, corresponding to Famine). A geographical area is attributed and mapped in a specific IPC phase when at least 20 percent of the population in the area is experiencing the conditions related to that phase or higher phases.

What does it mean to be in a given IPC Phase and how does this relate to response?

The IPC standardized scale divides up food insecurity into five Phases, ranging from IPC Phase 1 corresponding to minimal acute food insecurity to IPC Phase 5, corresponding to Famine. Each of these phases has important and distinct implications for where and how best to intervene.

The IPC Acute Food Insecurity Scale

Phase 1: Minimal	Phase 2: Stressed	Phase 3: Crisis	Phase 4: Emergency	Phase 5: Famine
Usually adequate and stable food access	Borderline adequate food access	Highly stressed and critical lack of food access with high and above usual malnutrition and accelerated depletion of livelihood assets	Severe lack of food access with excess mortality, very high and increasing malnutrition, and irreversible livelihood asset stripping	Extreme social upheaval with complete lack of food access and/or other basic needs where mass starvation, death and displacement are evident

Urgent action required

For more details on IPC Phase descriptions, see annex 1 on page 3

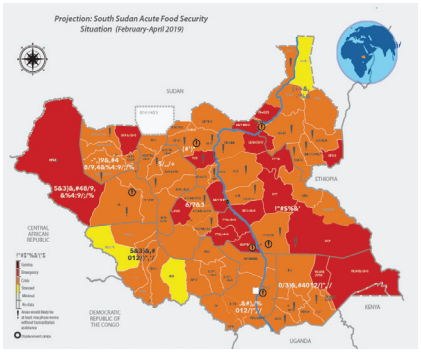
How does the IPC inform decisions?

In a recent independent evaluation of the IPC Global Strategic Programme 2014-18, donors, who are the biggest users of the IPC at global level, often referred to it as a 'global standard', or the 'gold standard'. The main way they report using it is for resource allocation, at global as a well as at country level, particularly for humanitarian resources associated with food security. ECHO, for instance, bases the food security part of its annual humanitarian plan on the IPC, and the IPC informs the allocation of resources within the US Government's Food for Peace. The annual Global Report on Food Crises, in turn based on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Classification, is a key resource for this purpose, providing a global overview as well as a consolidated analysis country-by-country. Both EU-DEVCO and ECHO use the Global Report on Food Crises to prioritise and target resources between countries.

What does an IPC analysis typically produce?

Key outputs of an IPC analysis include:

1) Maps that show the severity of the food insecurity prevailing in each area;



MAP KEY

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas not analysed

2) Population tables that show the number of people classified in different phases;

Population Table

Level 1 Name	Level 2 Name	Total # (pp)	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3 and Higher	
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		#	%
Central Equatoria	Juba	407,323	61,000	15	143,000	35	183,000	45	20,000	5	0	0	3	203,000	50
	Kajo-keji	109,771	11,000	10	44,000	40	49,000	45	5,000	5	0	0	3	54,000	49
	Lainya	104,043	10,000	10	42,000	40	47,000	45	5,000	5	0	0	3	52,000	50
	Morobo	143,067	21,000	15	50,000	35	64,000	45	7,000	5	0	0	3	71,000	50
	Terekeka	168,407	17,000	10	59,000	35	84,000	50	8,000	5	0	0	3	92,000	55
	Yei county	167,550	17,000	10	75,000	45	67,000	40	8,000	5	0	0	3	75,000	45
	Total	1,100,161	137,000	12	413,000	38	494,000	45	53,000	5	0	0	3	547,000	50

3) Information on key drivers of the current situation, such as main shocks or vulnerability factors. These can vary from easily identifiable shocks such as drought or conflict to other vulnerability factors such as lack of productive livelihood strategies or poor access to markets. For each analysis area the main drivers of the current food security situation are identified, and these are communicated in the IPC Analysis Report. Information on key drivers provides valuable information to decision-makers for response planning.

4) Current and projected analysis:

A typical IPC analysis provides two maps and population tables describing the severity and magnitude of food insecurity for two different periods:

a) The "current situation" reflecting the severity and magnitude of food insecurity at present. This classification is based on actual measurement of food security and nutrition outcomes based on data recently collected.

b) The "projected situation" reflecting the severity and magnitude of food insecurity in the near future (usually 3-6 months ahead) based on the most likely scenario.

How do you ensure that the data used for IPC analysis is credible (i.e. sufficient data of acceptable quality)?

All evidence used in IPC analysis is evaluated in terms of reliability. Only evidence that meets the reliability standards of IPC is taken into consideration for the purposes of classification and estimation of populations in different severity phases of food insecurity. The reliability criteria include specifications regarding data collection methods for both qualitative and quantitative evidence, as well as criteria regarding time relevance of evidence (i.e. how old evidence can be used for analysis). Any other evidence not meeting the specified criteria can be used to support the analysis, but cannot be used to classify or to estimate populations.

Which evidence/data is required for the classification in the most severe IPC Phases (IPC Phase 4, IPC Phase 4! and IPC Phase 5)

Evidence requirements for all the phases up to Phase 4 (Emergency) are the same for the purposes of classification and estimation of populations: evidence is required on at least two indicators for food consumption or livelihood change reflecting current conditions. In addition at least four up-to-date pieces of evidence on contributing factors, such as agricultural production, market prices or shocks should be available. This evidence has to be at least 'somewhat reliable', i.e. data collection has followed international standards but has limited representativeness, or data was collected before the current (agricultural) season.

For IPC Phase 5 (Famine) classifications evidence requirements are stricter. Reliable evidence is required on at least two of the three of outcomes of nutritional status, mortality or food consumption and livelihood change. However, in typical Famine situations it is not possible to conduct good quality, highly representative surveys due to volatility of the situation and often problematic humanitarian access.

As a result with IPC it is also possible to classify a Famine Likely situation with somewhat reliable evidence on the same outcomes. For any Famine classification all available evidence needs to be at or above Famine thresholds and indicate widespread mortality and acute malnutrition levels, as well as large-scale food deprivation.

What is the difference between IPC Phase 5 Famine and IPC Phase 5 Catastrophe?

A geographical area (e.g. county) is attributed and mapped in a specific IPC phase when at least 20 percent of the population in this area is experiencing the conditions related to that IPC phase or higher phases.
If some households in a given area are experiencing catastrophic conditions (i.e. extreme food gaps and significant mortality which is directly attributable to outright starvation or to the interaction of acute malnutrition and disease), these households are classified in IPC Phase 5 "Catastrophe".

If at least 20 percent of the households in a given area are facing IPC Phase 5 "Catastrophe" conditions, this area (e.g. county) is classified and mapped in IPC Phase 5 Famine and a Famine is declared in this area. Therefore, at least 20% of the households should be experiencing IPC Phase 5 conditions in order to classify the area in IPC Phase 5 Famine and declare a Famine.

How do you ensure that the IPC process and results are not subject to political interference or other bias?

The IPC was created precisely to supersede potential political interferences through technical neutrality, and, if necessary, to shine a light on the political dimensions (at both national and international levels) that may obfuscate the severity of food insecurity situations.

The IPC provides parameters which are based on international standards to analyze the severity of food insecurity from none to Famine levels. These parameters have been commonly agreed by all IPC partners and are followed to ascertain the severity of the situation.

***Quality assurance mechanisms** have been put in place to ensure that IPC analyses are neutral and evidence-based. These range from technical support from experts from the IPC Global Support Unit to country IPC analyses to ensure adherence to IPC protocols to external quality reviews of IPC analyses when concerns emerge regarding the technical rigour and/or neutrality of the analysis.*

*When Famine classification is being considered, an independent committee of global experts, called the **IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC)** is activated to support the country IPC teams of food security and nutrition specialists as an additional quality assurance and validation step for the IPC conclusions. The activation of the IPC FRC is also meant to further ensure technical independence of the analysis from potential political influence.*

Annex 1: Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table for Area Classification

Purpose: to guide convergence of evidence by using generally accepted international standards and cut-offs. The classification is intended to guide decision-making aiming at short-term improvements in food security.

Phase name and description	**Phase 1 None/Minimal**	**Phase 2 Stressed**	**Phase 3 Crisis**	**Phase 4 Emergency**	**Phase 5 Catastrophe/ Famine**
	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or • Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or • Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine Classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.)
Priority response objectives	Action required to build resilience and for disaster risk reduction	Action required for disaster risk reduction and to protect livelihoods	**Urgent action required to:** Protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps	Save lives and livelihoods	Revert/prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods

Annex 2: IPC Global Partnership Governance Structure