

IPC Global Support Unit and Global Food Security Cluster

GUIDANCE ON GLOBAL STANDARDS FOR COLLABORATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL



Introduction

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardized tools that aims at providing a "common currency" for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC draws from existing data and information produced by governments, UN Agencies, NGOs and other agencies located in-country. It is based on consensus-building processes to provide decision makers with a rigorous analysis of food insecurity along with objectives for response in both emergency and development contexts. This global, multi-partner initiative is governed and strategically guided by twelve major UN agencies, international NGOs and Regional Inter-governmental bodies: Action Contre la Faim (ACF) CARE International, CILSS, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, IGAD, Oxfam GB, Save the Children (UK&US), SICA/PRESANCA and WFP.

The Food Security Cluster (gFSC) has been established to coordinate the food security response during a humanitarian crisis, addressing issues of food availability, access and utilisation. The Cluster is based at WFP headquarters and is co-led by FAO and WFP. The Global Support Team includes FAO, WFP and NGOs members.

The IPC is one of the main tools for the gFSC at country level to inform food security response plans. In many countries where IPC is used, the analysis provided is integrated in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). However, collaboration between IPC and gFSC has been so far entirely left at the initiative of staff at country level and hence subject to a variety of factors linked to individual understandings of the important links existing between the IPC and gFSC activities in the country.

The purpose of this document is to address this challenge by outlining standardized guidance to country gFSC and IPC Technical Working Groups (TWG) on collaboration at country level for effective planning of IPC analysis and use of its findings to inform humanitarian plans and response. This guidance note results from collaboration between the global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) and the IPC Global Support Unit (IPC GSU) at global level.

IPC and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle¹ consists of a set of inter-linked tools and processes to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator and the humanitarian community at large to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection to people affected by crisis by better preparing, prioritizing, planning, implementing and monitoring the collective response through informed, timely and evidence-based decision making.

It is a six-step process² driven by the Humanitarian Coordinator where clusters play a central role in all phases. The IPC analysis is especially useful for the Food Security Cluster for the definition of food security related needs, priorities and caseloads and the preparation of the country HNO and HRP. In countries where IPC is developed and its results are widely accepted by the gFSC partners and available on time for the humanitarian annual planning process, the IPC analysis and map should be included in the Humanitarian Response Plan document.³

There are three main issues related to the use of IPC in the HPC process:

1. **Calendar:** Whenever and wherever feasible, the IPC and HNO/HRP calendar should be harmonised so that IPC analysis findings are released before the HNO/HRP are finalized and can thus be taken into consideration for the annual planning process. When this is not possible, the gFSC has to resort to alternative ways of estimating needs, priorities and caseloads. Therefore, it is important that, at country level, discussions between the gFSC and IPC TWG take place so that they agree on the most appropriate time for their activities in order to ensure that, whenever possible, IPC findings feed into the humanitarian planning process, while taking into account the seasonal relevance of IPC analyses.
2. **Severity ranking or Needs Comparison Tool or Heat map:** in the last two years OCHA has been proposing in many countries the use of this tool, which aims at compiling multi-sector indicators to produce a severity ranking map of humanitarian needs in the country. This tool has serious limitations in terms of methodology and the position of the gFSC, Cluster Lead Agencies (WFP and FAO) and IPC GSU is that, for food security classification, the IPC remains the reference ranking tool for the cluster. However, it is important that not only the timing of the IPC analysis and the humanitarian annual planning process are harmonized, but also that the IPC analysis has acceptable levels of confidence and credibility in the country.
3. **Sudden-onset or sharp escalation in protracted crisis:** in these cases an IPC analysis is usually neither available nor possible because of lack of up-to-date reliable evidence as the priority in these situations is usually to conduct emergency needs assessments and implement response. In such cases – and also in countries where the IPC is not used – the gFSC should set up a Technical Working Group to analyse available data from assessments of all partners and produce a joint overview of needs, priorities and targets to be used by the gFSC for response planning⁴.

¹ ref. IASC Reference Module for the implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, June 2015, it can be downloaded at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space/document/iasc-reference-module-humanitarian-programme-cycle>

² Consisting of (1) Emergency Response Preparedness; (2) Needs assessments and analysis resulting in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), (3) Strategic planning resulting in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), (4) Implementation and monitoring; (5) Resource Mobilization, (6) Operational Peer Review and Evaluation. In sudden-onset crisis or when there is a sharp escalation in a protracted crisis, a specific set of actions and calendar is defined for a rapid analysis of the situation and the publication of a flash appeal. In protracted crisis the HPC is usually carried out on an annual basis.

³ Should the integration of IPC in the Humanitarian Response Plan be questioned or prove problematic, the gFSC Coordinator should inform the gFSC and IPC GSU so that action can be taken to address this issue.

Country level cooperation between gFSC and IPC TWG

This section outlines recommended actions and good practice for the gFSC and IPC TWG to strengthen cooperation at country level.

At country level, the gFSC is the forum for analysing food security needs, planning, implementing and monitoring the humanitarian response in this sector. The gFSC coordinator also collaborates with other sectors/clusters to define a coherent multi-sector response to the crisis and, whenever possible, to provide a multi-sectorial analysis of vulnerability (in collaboration especially with the nutrition cluster). The gFSC role and core functions are defined by the IASC⁵. It is particularly relevant that the gFSC is expected to coordinate all food security stakeholders (incl. UN agencies, NGOs, national authorities⁶, etc.) in needs assessment and analysis as well as in response monitoring and reporting.

The national IPC Technical Working Group (TWG) is also expected to bring together the same actors to conduct IPC analysis, with support from the IPC Global Support Unit and IPC global partners, in order to build consensus on the classification of food insecurity, following standardized protocols.

There is therefore space for close cooperation between the gFSC and the IPC TWG at country level and **the following actions are recommended to enhance this cooperation:**

Bi-annual planning of IPC and HNO/HRP:

Every six months, the country gFSC and IPC TWG should meet to discuss their calendar of activities and ensure that, whenever and wherever possible, IPC analysis findings feed into the HNO and HRP. Moreover, throughout the year, gFSC Coordinators and IPC Focal Point are encouraged to have regular discussions/updates on activity plans and identify opportunities for synergies and collaboration at country level. It is advisable that the gFSC Coordinator attends all IPC TWG meetings.

Evidence retrieval and organization:

The first entry point for the IPC Focal Point and IPC TWG to collect all existing relevant evidence and reports on food security and malnutrition is the gFSC, which is expected to have an updated registry or repository of all food security and nutrition assessments conducted by partners and governments, as well as access to their primary data and reports.⁷ The gFSC Coordinator is expected to provide all available food security information to the IPC Focal Point and IPC TWG in due time⁸. The gFSC Coordinator will also facilitate a gap analysis of collected food security indicators based on the IPC Acute/Chronic analytical frameworks, in order to prevent situations in which an IPC analysis does not meet basic confidence levels as a result of lack of relevant and reliable data.

⁵ IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at country level, revised July 2014

⁶ The level of involvement and role of government institutions in the gFSC can vary according to the context.

⁷ Such information may include food security data – such as the Food Consumption Score (FCS), the reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) and food prices – which are produced by WFP mVAM, as well as food security and nutrition data (e.g. Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS), Coping Strategies Index (CSI), Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM)), which are collected through NGOs' baseline and endline surveys, SMART surveys etc. and/or Government led large-scale surveys and food security assessments; as well as data on contributing factors, such as food production, livestock conditions, rainfall patterns and prices among others.

⁸ It should be taken into consideration that a number of other reports, which are not systematically collected by the gFSC may be relevant for the IPC analysis and need to be retrieved and organized by the IPC TWG.

IPC analysis:

The approach and timeline of IPC analyses should be presented in advance to all partners in the gFSC meeting, where constraints and opportunities can be discussed. The composition of the IPC TWG should be defined in collaboration with the gFSC, in order to integrate the technical expertise of cluster partners, given that food security cluster partners often have a high level of technical expertise and in-depth knowledge of the food security context in the country.

Review, dissemination and use:

The results of IPC analyses should be presented and reviewed within the framework of the gFSC, with the participation of gFSC members and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. government officers, nutrition stakeholders, donors), prior to submission to government for endorsement and public release. The IPC TWG, Government and IPC Partners are responsible for the validation and dissemination of IPC analysis findings. The FSC should support the dissemination of IPC results within the food security community⁹ and beyond, with OCHA and other clusters, and use these findings to develop all food security planning documents.

IPC capacity building and certification:

In countries where the IPC is used, gFSC Coordinators (and Co-facilitators), IPC Focal Points and IPC TWGs should promote IPC certification¹⁰ and agree on the modalities for the completion of the certification process for gFSC and IPC TWG members. This implies identifying needs and opportunities for capacity building support and training in collaboration with the IPC GSU.

Global and regional cooperation and support to countries

Global level collaboration between the gFSC and the IPC Steering Committee/IPC GSU takes place at strategic, technical and operational level.

At strategic level, the gFSC is one of the 12 organizations composing the IPC Global Steering Committee, which manages the IPC and oversees the work of the IPC GSU.

At technical level, the gFSC is represented at the IPC Technical Advisory Group and is active in both the IPC Nutrition Working Group and the IPC Food Security Working Group, thereby bringing the cluster perspectives into IPC Technical Development work.

At operational level, the gFSC Global Support Team and the IPC GSU are in regular contact to exchange information and views on specific issues, such as plans for IPC activities and opportunities for training and IPC certification at global, regional and country level; technical and financial support to countries; technical issues and quality of IPC analyses; use of IPC for decision-making; links between IPC and other related initiatives etc.

Close cooperation between the IPC GSU and the gFSC is recommended at global level on the joint monitoring of the actual regular use of IPC analysis findings and figures in the HPC process. IPC GSU/ Regional Coordinators and gFSC country focal points will make sure that the present guidance is well-known by in-country counterparts and they will encourage in-country cooperation as described in point 3).

⁹ Results of IPC analysis and findings should systematically be presented at the cluster meetings

¹⁰ The IPC Level 1 certification process consists of: e-learning course on Food Security, participate in Level 1 training (face to face), participate in at least one IPC country acute analysis and complete the IPC Level 1 certification test. Ref. <http://www.ipcinfo.org/capacity-building/ipc-certification-programme/en/>

With regards to support to countries, the IPC GSU plays the following roles:

- It guides IPC technical development, include development and updates of IPC Tools and Procedures, guidance notes and training material to be used for IPC capacity building and analyses at country level;
- It provides technical capacity building support and training on IPC to countries/regions;
- It provides guidance on IPC quality and compliance standards and policies;
- It promotes global standards and best practices in IPC governance, technical processes and promotes the uptake of IPC in decision making processes;
- It provides financial support for IPC capacity building at country level.

At regional level, IPC GSU's capacity support to countries is coordinated by IPC Regional Coordinators. The GSU coordination and technical support to countries is decentralized to 5 sub-regional hubs, consisting of an IPC Regional Coordinator and one to two IPC Certified Trainers, depending on the number of countries in the region requiring IPC technical capacity building support.

The gFSC provides support and direction to country-level clusters by:

- Strengthening and developing national clusters' capacity, through trainings, briefings, backstopping missions and providing tools and guidance;
- Ensuring globalised information management systems, such as the management of the website, social media, the IM tool, surveys and cluster performance monitoring;
- Providing operational and surge support to national clusters, by deploying the Global Support Team members, Cluster Coordinators and Information Management Officers from the gFSC roster, global and stand-by partners and cluster lead agencies;
- Ensuring advocacy, communication and resource mobilisation as well as promoting diversified partnerships and inter-cluster collaboration;
- Managing systematised learning processes for cross-fertilisation between countries on strategic topics, good practices, lessons learnt and providing technical support by global-level working groups.

The gFSC doesn't have a presence/structure at regional level and it is managing from HQ its relations with the regional offices of the Cluster Lead Agencies, and eventually food security partners.

gFSC GLOBAL PARTNERS

Co-lead Agencies: FAO and WFP

Observers: ICRC, MSF

Partners: ACT Alliance, ACTED, ACF, ActionAid International, ADRA, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, CARE International, Caritas International, CRS, Concern Worldwide, COOPI, Danish Refugee Council, GOAL, HelpAge International, Impact Initiatives, Interaction, IFRC, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Lutheran World Federation, Mercy Corps Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Plan International, REACH Initiative, Samaritan's Purse, Save the Children, Solidarités International, Tearfund, Terre des Hommes, UNHCR, UN Habitat, UNICEF, Welthungerhilfe, World Animal Protection, World Vision International

Associates: Early Recovery Cluster, Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, Global Health Cluster, Global Logistics Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, Global WASH Cluster, UNOCHA

Resource Partners: Australian Aid, CARE, GenCap, German Federal Foreign Office, HelpAge Int., IFRC, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ProCap, Samaritan's Purse, SIDA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, ECHO, DFID, Welthungerhilfe, World Vision International

IPC GLOBAL PARTNERS: ACF, CARE International, CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET, gFSC, IGAD, EC-JRC, Oxfam, Save the Children, SICA-Presanca, WFP.

IPC RESOURCE PARTNERS: EU DEVCO, DFID, USAID.

For More information:



www.ipcinfo.org

www.fscluster.org