

COVID-19: IPC CONCEPT NOTE

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF CONDUCTING IPC TRAININGS AND ANALYSES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact around the globe. Not only does it entail scaling up public health preparedness and response and protecting vulnerable populations but it also requires mitigating the broader social and economic impact on the population. Countries with existing food crises are particularly vulnerable as populations already facing acute food insecurity have very limited or no capacity to cope with such a shock. The pandemic may also affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance due to transport restrictions, reduced financial resources given the need to support COVID-19 efforts etc. This may have major consequences for the populations who are heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive and/or protect their livelihoods.

The IPC has been playing a major role in informing decisions on resource allocations and programming of food and livelihood assistance in 30 countries. In the current context, this role becomes even more critical. In the same time, conducting IPC analysis typically implies gathering people from various parts of the country in a central location and bringing in IPC experts from overseas to provide facilitation and technical support. In the current context of travel restrictions and containment, this approach is not feasible.

By leveraging existing technologies and existing tools, such as the web-based IPC Information Support System (ISS), the IPC initiative is well positioned to pursue IPC activities in a different way, one which does not put people at risk. In this document, the IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) provides an overview of the proposed alternative approach to conducting IPC trainings and analyses through virtual modalities. To complement this note, the IPC GSU is currently developing the following resources, which will be shared shortly with country IPC Technical Working Groups and other relevant stakeholders.

- (i) Virtual IPC training packages
- (ii) Detailed practical guidance on the step-by-step approach to conducting virtual IPC Analyses
- (iii) Technical guidance on evidence requirements in the context of COVID 19 when field data collection is not possible
- (iv) Technical guidance on analysis of the impact of COVID 19 on food insecurity

2. Objective

The proposed alternative IPC processes imply setting up extraordinary measures to ensure that the IPC - can continue to inform decision-making by providing actionable knowledge on food insecurity and acute malnutrition in a timely manner. This entails introducing specific and efficient processes at the country level, while ensuring compliance with IPC protocols, including IPC Function 1 (Build Technical Consensus). Importantly, IPC will remain a country owned process that will ensure that analysts are constantly engaged.

The IPC GSU will provide remote support to country teams with the aim of ensuring a neutral process and producing high quality analyses. GSU's level of engagement with analysis teams will be tailored to countries' needs, capacity and number of areas to analyze.

Analyses will be preceded by virtual IPC courses, i.e. refresher training, Level 1 or Level 2 courses depending on countries' needs.

3. Implementation modalities

3.1 IPC Trainings

a) Overview

Trainings will be conducted using the online IPC Learning System, which is hosted in the Moodle learning platform and/or through webinars. The IPC Virtual Training Package will comprise three courses:

- IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Refresher Training: to be delivered through webinars and tailored to the country's needs.
- IPC Acute Food Insecurity Level 1 Training: still to be developed through the IPC Learning System.
- IPC Acute Food Insecurity Level 2 Training: already available through the IPC Learning System.

For both the Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition scales, given that, as part of the IPC V3.0 roll out, in 2019, almost all countries already undertook at least one IPC Level 1 training, IPC GSU has prioritized developing virtual IPC Refresher and Level 2 trainings.

Similar to face-to-face trainings, IPC Level 1 and Level 2 virtual courses will count towards formal IPC certification.

b) Modalities

IPC Level 1 and Level 2 trainings will include approximately 30 study hours (each) as follows:

- 20 hours of online sessions including real time streamed presentations and on-line exercises, case studies and discussions.
- Approximately 10 hours of individual work including preparatory tasks before online sessions and homework tasks.

IPC Refresher trainings will consist of up to 15 study hours divided as follows:

- Up to 12 hours of online sessions, depending on the country's/participants' needs, including real time streamed presentations and applied discussions for decisions on process and parameters as well as use of evidence and other technical issues that need to be considered for the upcoming country IPC analysis.
- Up to 3 hours of individual work including homework tasks focusing on documenting and operationalizing decisions made during online sessions for the upcoming analysis.

These trainings can be given based on any timing combination depending on the country's needs and preference (e.g. over a few days or spread over a few weeks).

Each participant will be allocated an online mentor/buddy, who will facilitate group work, ensure that all learners stay on track and address any/all arising questions.

For each training, participation will be capped to a maximum of 25 people and will require high-speed internet access such as fiber and 3G as well as basic computer and internet navigation skills. In case of limited/suboptimal internet access/connection, alternative options will be explored, such as sharing training materials via email or through web-downloads, with exercises to be completed offline.

3.2 IPC Analysis Process

a) Stakeholders

While maintaining technical consensus at the core of IPC 'virtual' analyses, it is important to ensure that the process is both manageable and efficient. To this end, a reduced number of analysts (i.e. core team) will be responsible for completing all steps of the IPC analysis process using the ISS and producing preliminary findings. A wider group of analysts and key informants will be engaged at specific stages of the process, for instance to provide feedback on preliminary classifications produced by the core team. The facilitation team will play a crucial role in supporting this process and ensuring compliance with IPC protocols.

The main stakeholders of the IPC virtual analysis process are described below.

(i) **The Lead Facilitator** (IPC Level 3 certified from the IPC GSU): Through the lead facilitator, GSU will provide guidance on both technical issues and process with the aim of producing high quality analyses that comply with IPC protocols, including technical consensus. This will imply supporting and guiding the IPC virtual analysis through the whole process, step-by-step.

(ii) **The Country Facilitation Team**: This team will be composed of a few experienced IPC co-facilitators (IPC Level 2 certified and Level 3 applicants) who will oversee the work of the IPC analysis team, which will be split into small groups. Each member of the facilitation team (co-facilitator) will thus lead a small group of analysts working on a specific area (e.g. region) of the country. As in regular analysis workshops, the country facilitation team will be in charge of preparing the analysis and ensuring that the country areas attributed to each co-facilitator/group are analysed in line with IPC protocols and within the established timeframe. In countries where the number of people meeting the criteria for co-facilitation is insufficient, GSU will provide co-facilitators from its pool of global and regional experts. Capacity and plurality will be the main criteria for the composition of this group.

(iii) **The Core Analysis Team**: The country IPC Technical Working Group (TWG) will identify a maximum of 15-20 analysts (depending on the number of areas to analyse) to form the core analysis team. The members of this group will be selected by the TWG, based on guidance provided by GSU, considering their level of certification, experience in IPC, availability, access to internet and proficiency in the use of ISS and collaboration tools. The IPC core analysis team will be split into small groups of 2-3 people representing different institutions (government technical services, UN agencies, NGOs). Each small group will be facilitated by a co-facilitator and will be in charge of conducting the analysis in the ISS for a given group of areas (analysis units) on a consensual basis. Capacity and plurality will be the main criteria for the composition of this group.

(iv) **The 'Local Context Focal Points'**: As most of the members of the core analysis team matching the above-mentioned criteria are likely to be based in the capital city, it is important to ensure that knowledge and understanding of the local context (at subnational level) is fully factored in the analysis. To this end, focal points at local/decentralized level (at least one for each group of areas/region), will be identified and consulted during the analysis process. The 'local context focal points' will typically belong to government technical services, NGOs or UN field offices, thereby ensuring plurality. These key informants will be consulted at different stages of the analysis process but will not be in charge of conducting the analysis in ISS. There are not requirements in terms of IPC certification for these key informants. Rather, knowledge of the local context and plurality will be the main criteria for the composition of this group.

(v) **The larger Analysis Team**: This team will include all the IPC analysts who are usually involved in the country IPC analyses. Given that, to keep the process manageable and efficient, a restricted number of analysts (the core analysis team) will engage in all steps of the process, it is important that the 'regular' members of the IPC analysis team (usually ranging from 40 to 90 experts depending on the country) can contribute to and provide feedback on the IPC analysis findings. The larger analysis team members will be consulted at specific stages of the analysis process. However, similar to the local context focal points, they will not be in charge of conducting the analysis in ISS.

b) Process

The IPC virtual analysis process will follow a four-stage approach: Planning, Preparation, Analysis and Wrap-up. For analyses with a high number of areas to analyze, GSU may suggest ways to adapt the analysis process, tools and/or modality in order to enhance effectiveness. However, such measures will not affect compliance with IPC protocols and will ensure that IPC analysis requirements are met.

Planning

The planning phase will entail communicating with country IPC Technical Working Groups and other relevant country and regional stakeholders about the proposed alternative measures. For countries that wish to implement virtual IPC training and analysis, modalities, participation criteria and support from the GSU will be discussed and a timeline for activities will be developed.

The duration of the planning phase will depend on the context/country as well as the urgency to conduct an IPC analysis (e.g. based on deadlines for decision-making, date of data collection etc.).

Preparation (one week)

The preparation phase should last one week and entails activities that are similar to the preparation of a "regular" (face-to-face) IPC analysis, namely:

- (i) Defining the analysis team composition, i.e. identification of the experts that compose the five groups mentioned above. This is documented in the IPC analysis matrix in the ISS.
- (ii) Allocating analysts and co-facilitators to specific areas to analyse.
- (iii) Putting IPC analysts and local context focal points in contact with their respective co-facilitators and lead facilitator.
- (iv) Identifying analysis parameters and developing the detailed agenda for the virtual analysis.
- (v) Preparing the analysis in the ISS, including: creating the analysis in the ISS country portal, checking and uploading country wide and area specific evidence.

Analysis (one week)

The second week is fully dedicated to the areas analysis and includes the following stages:

- (i) Holding the inception meeting of the core analysis team to discuss analysis parameters, agenda and milestones, key drivers and broad projections assumptions at the country level.
- (ii) Starting areas analysis with, as a first step, area induction meetings with the designated local context focal point(s).
- (iii) Holding daily facilitators' meetings throughout the week. This is an opportunity for facilitators to share and discuss main concerns and technical challenges faced. Through ISS, the GSU monitors the analysis in real time and provides technical guidance and recommendations during these daily meetings, which are minuted. A hotline is also established to facilitate and document constant interaction among all facilitators.
- (iv) Holding small group vetting sessions for the areas analysed by each group. Local context focal points are invited to these virtual meetings. Consensus has to be reached within the group and minority views and concerns are documented so they can later on be reported to the wider group in the plenary session.
- (v) Holding a core analysis team vetting meeting, led by GSU, with all core analysis team members and facilitators. Facilitators present the results of their groups' work. Questions and concerns are raised and documented and core team members reach consensus over the final area classifications and population estimates. Based on the issues raised, the analysis of specific areas is revised and all analysis steps are finalized in the ISS.

Wrap up

To ensure timely publication of the IPC analysis results, the wrap up phase should not take more than two weeks. This entails the following activities:

- (i) Debriefing and completion of the Self-Assessment tool (as per IPC V.3.0 protocols) by the core analysis team.
- (ii) Presentation of the IPC analysis results to the larger analysis team in a plenary session for feedback/comments. Recommendations are documented and, when agreed by the core analysis team (based on evidence), are incorporated in the analysis.
- (iii) Identification of the drafting team for the IPC report. Once drafted, the report is circulated among the larger analysis team members for final endorsement.
- (iv) The usual country process is followed for publication and dissemination of the IPC report. Once released at the country level, the report is uploaded on the IPC website for global dissemination.

c) Internet requirements, ISS & collaboration tools

In order to take part in IPC virtual trainings and analyses, high-speed internet connection will be required to enable participants to use Moodle (for trainings), the ISS (for analyses) and other internet-based collaboration tools such as Skype, Slack and Zoom. Specifically, this implies having DSL/Phone/Fiber/other 'hot-spot' / internet connection which is 3mbps or higher. If phone/mobile is used with pre or post-paid plan it should have either 3G, 4G, or LTE coverage.

Given that IPC virtual training and analysis participants are expected to be working from home and thus rely on their home or mobile phone connection, internet top ups may be required in order to ensure adequate connection. GSU stands ready to cover these costs should the countries need financial support.

Participants may also face IT-related issues due to the fact that individuals may not have access to their office IT staff. The GSU will thus provide support to respond to individual IT issues as needed. In addition, GSU will provide the usual continuous ISS-specific support and maintenance.

A Quick Guide will be made available to IPC analysts to identify the key steps in implementing the various online tools in a virtual analysis setting.