Preliminary Synthesis Report of IPC Online Technical Forum

Background Working Paper for the IPC International Technical Meeting
March 21-22, 2007

Contents:

Acknowledgements:

The technical input and facilitation of the following experts are particularly acknowledged: Mr. Nick Haan (Consultant/FAO); Mr. Gary Eilerts (USAID), Mr. Chris Leather (Oxfam), Prof. Daniel Maxwell (Tufts), Prof. Peter Walker (Tufts), Ms. Joyce Luma (WFP), Mr. Wolfgang Herbinger (WFP), Ms. Cindy Holleman (FSAU) and Mr. Paul Harvey (ODI), Ms. Denise Melvin (Facilitator, FAO), Mr. Colin Andrews (Facilitator, FAO), Hilke Stuempel (Technical Support, FAO).

Contributions gratefully recognized from: Agnes Dhur, Aira Htenas, Alexis Hoskins, Asif Niazi, Brendan McDonald, Byron Ponce-Segura, Calum McLean, Chris Leather, Christian Romer Lovendal, Cindy Holleman, Colin Andrews, Cristina Lopriore, Daniel Maxwell, Denise Melvin, Dipayan Bhattacharyya, Erdgin Mane, Francesco DelRe, Francoise Trine, Gary Eilerts, Gedlu Mekonnen, Gina Kennedy, Grainne Moloney, Guenter Hemrich, Helen Young, Howard Standen, James Tefft, Joyce Luma, Kiflemariam Amdemariam, Luca Russo, Margarita Flores, Marie Claude Dop, Mark Gordon, Mark McGuire, Mark Smulders, Michael O'Donnell, Nancy Mock, Nanna Skau, Neil Marsland, Nicholas Haan, Paul Currion, Paul Harvey, Paul Howe, Peter Walker, Richard Choularton, Simon Mansfield, Stephen Devereux, Suzanne Jaspers, Tanya Boudreau, Terri Ballard, and Wolfgang Herbinger

Introduction

This document summarizes the key points expressed by participants in the IPC On-Line Forum from February 14th to March 16th, 2007. Over 125 experts from UN, NGO, government, academic, and donor agencies participated in the forum. The purpose of the IPC On-Line forum was to engage a wide group of stakeholders in specific discussions about technical and institutional aspects of the IPC. The summary aims to merely document key points raised by participants, without putting a value statement on them. This synthesis report will provide a basis for further discussions in the IPC International Meeting to be held in Rome March 2007.

Purpose and Limitations of the IPC[1]

The objective of this introductory session was to identify the overall purpose and limitations of the IPC approach.

In introducing the discussion topic, Mr. Gary Eilerts (USAID) explored whether the participants see the greatest value of the IPC as (i) an outcome scale (ii) an outcome scale linked to a fixed set of objective outcome indicators (iii) an outcome scale, objective indicators, and process of analysis or (iv) whatever scale, indicators and process of analysis that may be determined by this IPC process.

In addressing the overall purpose of the IPC, participants focussed on the role of the tool in defining the relative severity of crises based on a number of discrete phase classifications.

The wider scope of the tool was also debated in terms of:
Defining the severity of a crisis based on objective criteria as defined by the phase classification and reference outcome indicators.
Providing a basic understanding of the type of crisis; a future risk assessment of its evolution as well as providing strategic guidance on appropriate responses based on evidence of immediate, mitigating and underlying factors.

Opportunities

In understanding the opportunities of the IPC the following key points emerged:

- ***Strategic value for evidence based analysis and appropriate response***: IPC aims to provide a transparent, evidence based and consensual approach to classifying food security and crisis situations. This is particularly relevant in the context of a changing international system and the stress placed on improved effectiveness and efficiency of response (e.g. Good Humanitarian Initiatives; Central Emergency Response Fund; CERF). The comparability and impartiality of an analysis can contribute to improved impartial, needs based responses.

[1] Note: Suggested ways forward are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive.

- ***Comparative advantage and link to information requirements:*** IPC aims to provide a comparative analysis of a particular situation within and between countries, and link that to appropriate response. By bringing together a range of diverse variables, the IPC focuses on meta-analysis of existing information and analysis, rather than on the methods of data collection per se (e.g. biologic measurement), enabling improved contextual analysis. While the IPC is not an information system in itself, the resulting process of analysis can help to highlight related upstream information requirements related to data availability; data sources; monitoring and evaluation.
- ***Institutionalising a consensual approach:*** From a user perspective at country level the IPC approach attempts to provide a common platform for discussion amongst analysts with diverse expertise and agency backgrounds. The IPC provides an entry point to institutionalise consensual approaches based on existing information systems and existing food security institutional structures. This has the potential to promote increased accountability and transparency, as evidenced for example in previous exercises in Sudan.

Challenges & Limitations

Clarifying focus of IPC – humanitarian or food security tool, or both? **The IPC is designed to address both food security and humanitarian concerns, which are related but also cover separate sectoral dimensions. There is a need to explicitly define the focus of the IPC in order to clarify whether we are dealing primarily with food insecurity, humanitarian crisis, hunger or something else. This will also help to inform the degree to which the IPC is complementing or duplicating existing methodologies and tools.**

- ***Combining current and future trends under one framework:***
  - ***Situation Analysis versus Early Warning****: An understanding of the current situation and its likely evolution is required in order to plan appropriate responses. However the combination of both functions under one framework can raise methodological and conceptual challenges. For example, when combining severity and early warning functions, an early warning model/conceptual framework may be required that is not necessary for an outcome scale.
  - ***Acute versus chronic crisis*:*** Related to this, the inclusion of acute and chronic aspects in the phase classification scale introduces both severity and temporal aspects which may not be directly comparable. The current IPC framework raises challenges in separating chronic and acute crisis contexts. This may require the introduction of new terminology for the phase classifications to reflect only the severity component e.g. levels of reversibility based on nature of crisis and coping.
- ***Prioritising responses in terms of severity: The implications of a severity measurement?*** The incorporation of a severity measurement raises a number of implications. First, the actual magnitude (number of population impacted) of a crisis may not be fully captured in a severity classification. Second, there is an inherent risk that livelihood and less acute crisis scenarios are overlooked in strategic response, perhaps a

problem more related to advocacy rather than to IPC analysis. Third, 'severity' may not scale or add up the same way when using various indicators. For example, acute malnutrition indicators will interpret differently based on context; also as we employ multiple indicators, they may not necessarily scale up equally.

- ***Reducing subjectivity in process of analysis*:*** The IPC aims to provide a transparent, neutral analysis through a convergence of evidence approach. For this, further guidance is required to ensure the analysis is not open to political manipulation and that any apparent subjectivity can be reduced

** Technical issues specifically addressed in later discussion topics*

Priority Areas for Technical Follow Up

- Definition of precise focus and scope of IPC: A food security and/or humanitarian classification system
- Clarification on how to further delineate/include chronic and acute components.
- Development of early warning component.
- Clarification on the use of severity as unit of measurement for IPC

IPC Phase Classifications and Early Warning Levels

The objective of the session was to discuss technical aspects and areas of improvement in the IPC Phase Classification and Early Warning Levels. In introducing the discussion Mr. C. Leather (Oxfam) identified the following issues: how the IPC approach can distinguish between chronic and transitory dimensions of food insecurity; how to present future severity and whether or not there was a need to change the phase classification labels.

The discussion considered wide ranging feedback, including the results of country, regional and global exercises undertaken by FEWSNET, WFP and the regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group in Horn of Africa. Related concerns - particularly on the use of indicators and the strategic response framework - have been documented in later summaries.

Key Issues and Recommendations:

The phase classification and early warning levels relate to the severity of food insecurity and its temporal dimensions, i.e. severity of the situation (current); distinction of transitory or chronic situations (how current severity compares to historical trends); projected trend & probability (Early Warning level).

The phase classification and early warning levels are constructed to ensure that the IPC achieves (i) comparable analysis using objective outcome indicators (ii) integrated use of data, methods and approaches (iii) minimal rigour and transparency (iv) strong linkage to a strategic response framework and (v) clear representation through cartographic protocols.

In the technical review discussion the following key issues and recommendations emerged:

1. The inclusion of Chronic Dimensions of Food Insecurity

The Phase Classification includes chronic dimensions to address the temporal aspects of food insecurity and structural issues linked to vulnerability and resilience. This is important in promoting medium and longer term interventions under the Strategic Response Framework, and also to inform ongoing monitoring of a situation.

The simultaneous focus on temporal and severity components raises confusion. First, the phase classification and general descriptors appear to include chronic (temporal) aspects only in the second phase, and in the dietary diversity descriptor, which raises difficulties in making consistent comparisons across time and space. Second, a more complete incorporation of chronic factors may require the inclusion of poverty indices and risk analyses for which more advanced methodologies are needed.

Suggested Ways Forward on Chronic Factors***:***

The IPC could either (i) capture only the dynamically changing situation analysis or (ii) consider situation and structural food security aspects. This may lead to the following options:

A. IPC addresses chronic factors as per current Technical Manual, but with minor changes e.g. cartographic methods to denote temporal aspects in wider phases.
B. IPC presents information on severity at a given point in time and all information on the current, past and future severity separately and explicitly.

IPC incorporates chronic factors (including vulnerability and resilience) more thoroughly, adding a third structural component to complement severity and early warning.

2. The Phase Classification Labels and General Descriptors

The designation of five discrete phase classifications presents diverse food security situations beyond the standardised ‘emergency-development’ classifications and also helps to incorporate livelihood aspects more clearly. The precise labelling of the phase classification raises difficulties. First, should the phase classifications present on one or both aspects of food security and

humanitarian crisis? This question of technical focus also emerged in the introductory forum. Second, there are conceptual and methodological difficulties in including a chronic classification under Phase 2 (see above). Third, the current phase classifications may give the impression or a linear progression from one phase to another, which is incorrect.

Suggested Ways Forward on Phase Classifications:

Revise current labelling of phase 2 e.g. borderline food insecure, vulnerable to food insecurity. Incorporate chronic factors more clearly in cartographic map.
Revise current labelling and positioning of phase 2. Move phase two out and alongside phase 1 to better reflect starting points of a crisis.
Break down phase 2 into sub-categories using different levels of severity.

A. Change labelling so that *'food security'* is the unit of measurement i.e. "1. Food Secure 2. Mild Food Insecurity 3. Moderate Food Insecurity 4. Severe Food Insecurity 5. Extreme Food Insecurity"
B. Change labelling so that *'reversibility'* is unit of measurement i.e. "1. Normal internal coping with crisis 2. Abnormal/destructive internal coping starting to occur 3. Loss of productive assets beginning 4. Loss of livelihood underway Stage 5: Complete destitution/Mortality will occur, is occurring".

Remove reference to 'imminent' outcome which relates to early warning aspects.

3. Incorporation of future severity and its probability: early warning aspects

The linkage between outcome indicators and early warning is seen as a critical component to indicate 'how bad things might get', probability and the time frame of response.

However, as detailed in the introduction some challenges of combing the early warning and severity function are as follows. An early warning function may require an explicit model/conceptual framework which is not necessary for an outcome scale. The incorporation of early warning aspects in the classification does not clarify on methodological issues other than invoking the equation linking risk to hazard, vulnerability and capacity – and in particular 'capacity' is difficult to quantify. The inclusion of current and imminent outcomes under the reference outcome table may be misleading and raise confusion with early warning aspects. Also, as raised by the FEWSNET study clarification is required on the timeframe involved in early warning analysis to ensure more relevance for decision making and contingency planning.

Suggested Ways Forward on Early Warning:

Continue without prescribing early warning approach/method i.e. encourage Early Warning frameworks based on available tools.
Tighten early warning levels (normal, alert alarm and emergency) so they are more consistent with IPC scale and quantitative thresholds, as per Kenya example.
Clarify early warning timeline arising from IPC analysis to ensure a robust basis for decision making and scenario planning.

Consider further methodologies for IPC Early Warning components e.g. scenario building methods, including projection against a baseline, Delphi process and historical analogy, as per FEWSNET example.
Present all early warning information and trend analysis separately.

Priority Areas for Technical Follow Up

- Are chronic factors considered within or outside of IPC framework?
- Do the labels need to be changed and if so, with what unit of measurement e.g. coping, food security, humanitarian scale?
- Can Early Warning aspects be addressed by providing greater technical guidance on broad principles and without prescribing a methodology?

IPC Reference Outcome Indicators

The objective of the session was to examine the IPC Reference Table and Reference Outcome Indicators. The discussion focussed on the use, objectivity and adequacy of the current reference outcome indicators for comparable and impartial analysis.

In introducing the discussion Prof. D. Maxwell (Tufts University) set out the following key questions: (i) are the indicators adequately objective (ii) is it practical (or necessary) to have the number of indicators specified (iii) should weighting of indicators be made more explicit and (iv) is the distinction between process and outcome indicators clear?

Key Issues and Recommendations:

A set of objective reference outcome indicators aims to provide a transparent and technically neutral analysis for needs based responses, rather than negotiated responses which may be driven by perceptions, political implications and expected resources. In the analysis and interpretation of such indicators the guiding IPC principle is to use a range of indicators that lead to a 'generally correct' rather than 'precisely wrong' analysis. This means using the IPC approach for sound analytical conclusions backed by evidence rather than a narrowed debate on 'rigid thresholds and weighting systems'. In light of these considerations the following key technical issues emerged:

1. The adequacy and coverage of current reference outcome indicators:

In many ways the current selection of reference outcome indicators within the IPC approach presents a 'gold standard' of information required to capture full dimensions of a crisis, ensure comparability and transparency.

Within the current selection of indicators there are some basic challenges related to their adequacy and coverage. For example, only four indicators are present in every phase – acute malnutrition, food access/availability, water access/availability and civil security. Other indicators emerge selectively across particular phases or are listed with a 'not a defining characteristic' descriptor e.g. hazards (in first two phases); disease only in the later three phases. This may present an implied weighting. Finally, the treatment of particular indicators for precise phases and variables was highlighted i.e. phase 5; water quality, terms of trade.

Underlying this are deeper challenges:

There is reoccurring confusion regarding what precisely the indicators are classifying e.g. the challenges of classifying acute humanitarian crises that are not, first and foremost, about food security. This is particularly evident at the upper end of the scale where the linkages/interactions across different sectors may not be clear.

There is a relative importance assigned to particular indicators that cannot be escaped, particularly malnutrition and mortality. This has both technical and institutional implications and may highlight the need for more explicit linkages with other tools and methodologies e.g. Health and Nutrition Humanitarian Tracking System.

Suggested Ways Forward on Adequacy/Coverage of Reference Outcome Indicators[2]*:*

Revise current reference outcome indicators to account to fill information gaps and refine the identification of key variables.
Develop a minimum set of indicators for which there must be available data in order to assign a phase.
Cluster reference outcomes in terms of 'universally' agreed indicators versus less quantifiable outcome indicators, more context specific indicators

A. Prioritise malnutrition and mortality rates as the key 'outcome' indicators with universally agreed thresholds to ensure '*normalisation of crises'* is '*abnormalised*'.

Develop a family of IPCs, each with different focus e.g. health, markets.
Make more explicit linkages with other methods and tools e.g. HTS.

2. Convergence in analysis of reference outcome indicators, not "among" indicators:

The IPC analysis should be primarily concerned with convergence in the analysis of reference outcome (indicators) rather than convergence among our indicators. This ensures that an analysis can be based on contextual understanding of the relationship between the different reference outcomes, their temporal interaction and the overall analytical 'story'. The priority is for sound analytical conclusions backed by evidence, rather than a narrower methodological debate on weighting and thresholds.

In achieving this further consideration must be given to the type of guidance afforded to analysts for informed judgement and interpretation. In understanding the convergence in analysis of reference in indicators the following challenges emerge:

A single outcome cannot be captured in one variable. A combination of direct and indirect evidence is required, particularly given cost, technical expertise and practicality of primary data collection e.g. FSAU nutrition work.
The relationship and interactions among variables can be divergent, as well as convergent. There are many crisis situations where food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality do not all cross critical thresholds as the same time.
The distinction between 'process' and 'outcome' indicators points to separate timeframes. If not understood clearly this may risk in misdiagnosis of causal links.

- The linkage between the reference indicators and a predictive framework is unclear. The function of the IPC in understanding the ***imminent situation*** (which is 'near certain', as opposed to 'high' / 'moderate' early

[2] Suggested ways forward could be one of more of the choices identified.

warning) needs clarification. This links to important considerations e.g. tracking rate of change of reference indicators; linkages to other approaches e.g. FEWSNET and HEA.

Suggested Ways Forward on Convergence in Analysis of Reference Outcome Indicators:

Provide further guidance on classification of outcome indicators based on direct and indirect evidence, drawing perhaps on current work of FSAU nutrition team, Young and Jaspers (2006).
Identify the precise linkage between the reference indicators and the IPC predictive framework and clarify on the relationship with approaches such as HEA, FEWSNET.
Develop risk categories to assign to crisis situations with or without information e.g. as per work of Nutrition Information in Crisis System, UN SCN.
Develop clearer guidance for technical groups at country and regional level.
Establish an international working group for oversight / technical guidance.

3. *Baseline Information Requirements*

There was concern about the volume of information required to make IPC classifications current and the risk that an over-reliance on secondary data may provide an out-of-date or even misleading analysis.

Emerging from this discussion the importance of underlying baseline information requirements came into focus. Properly functioning and well selected baseline information can provide the basis for improved monitoring and for the extrapolation of trends from an IPC analysis. In the wider context this highlights the potentiality of the IPC as an advocacy tool to highlight upstream information requirements, including the need for improved diagnostics.

Suggested Ways Forward on Baseline Information Requirements:

Explicitly support efforts to make baseline information systems consistent with IPC analysis.
Advocacy generally for improved baseline information systems.

Priority Areas for Technical Follow Up

- Review the adequacy and coverage of existing data and fill information gaps/weaknesses. Also, decide whether a clustering of indicators is required?
- Identify whether institutional mechanisms are required to provide technical guidance on overall IPC approach, particularly convergence in indicators.
- Clarify on how baseline information requirements are supported implicitly or explicitly through IPC work.

IPC Strategic Response Framework

The objective of the session was to examine the IPC Strategic Response Framework. The discussion focussed on understanding the implications of the Strategic Response Framework; the degree to which it can guide response interventions and how it could be improved.

In introducing the discussion Prof. Walker asked (i) whether the three categories of response are appropriate and adequate (ii) how focused should the IPC Strategic Response Framework be (iii) should the Strategic Response Framework also focus on who needs to act (iv) should the framework also seek to stimulate responses from affected communities?

Key Issues and Recommendations

The IPC strategic response framework focuses on providing a generic framework to ensure that response interventions address immediate negative outcomes, support livelihoods and address underlying causes. An integral component of the IPC is the delineation of response analysis and response (options) analysis as distinct steps in the process of response, which logically fit between situation analysis and response implementation.

In this sense the strategic response framework is purposely designed to be generic, yet comprehensive enough to guide on the broad dimensions of appropriate response. The framework is a rudimentary component of this IPC and aims to offer a critical bridge to the area of response analysis. However the area of response analysis is still underdeveloped with little guidance for analysts and decision makers to prioritise/sequence appropriate interventions e.g. CAP NAF, Post Conflict Needs Assessments. In this context the key issues related to the IPC Strategic Response Framework were:

1. Strengthening the IPC link between Situation Analysis and Response Analysis:

The IPC Strategic Response Framework (SRF) could be developed to guide more effective response stratagems and to advise on responsibilities for follow through. The current SRF is underpinned by a number of challenges.
First, response comes in many forms. Moving between different phases will change the quality and quantity of responses, as well as institutional mechanisms for response. The current areas for response may therefore be overly broad particularly in addressing mitigating and underlying factors.
Second, the current separation of situation analysis and response may be unclear and the analytical capacities required to design good interventions based on an IPC or livelihoods framework may be underestimated.

How to move forward on linking situation analysis and response analysis:

Review current SRF options and define broad areas of intervention, particularly linked to addressing the mitigating and underlying factors.
Define areas of intervention and explicitly list potential response intervention, where possible including a prioritisation and sequencing of interventions.

Develop components to assign responsibilities and roles for different institutions and actors in IPC response
Provide improved guidance for the development of appropriate responses based on livelihood analysis
Support work strengthen/identify management and institutional analysis capacities where IPC is implemented and in light of local contexts e.g. decentralisation
Incorporate new elements for response planning, including forward and backwards linkages to consider analytical and programming insights between situation/response

*2. **Development of Response Options Analysis Protocols:***

The IPC analysis highlights the scope for improved response analysis and the relatively underdeveloped nature of work in this area. Some of the key bottlenecks in this area include a lack of response prioritisation or sequencing and a lack of expertise across institutions to devise robust interventions. To this end the requirements for improved response analysis are of vital importance. This may extend beyond the scope of the current IPC approach.

How to move forward on linking situation analysis and response analysis:

A. Develop food security and humanitarian response protocol ***within*** the IPC approach
B. Develop food security and humanitarian response protocol ***outside*** of the IPC approach

Support wider development of response protocols incorporating best practices and lessons learned e.g. from CAP NAF, PCNA, OCHA contingency planning
Support wider training / capacity building for improved management and institutional analysis capacities.
Support wider development of response options analysis work that might complement IPC approach e.g. impact assessment; tests of appropriateness, scenario building

Priority Areas for Technical Follow Up

- Define the current areas for intervention within the current IPC SRF. Does this include a list of options for response that are sequenced and prioritised?
- Address management and analytical bottlenecks to devise response interventions. Does this require general guidance / specific guidance where the IPC is implemented?
- Support the development of response (options) analysis protocols? Does this take place within or outside of the current IPC approach?

IPC Process of Analysis: The Analysis Templates

The objective of the session was to examine the IPC Analysis Templates and how they facilitate a convergence of evidence approach. In introducing the discussion Joyce Luma and Wolfgang Herbinger examined the opportunities and constraints in using the IPC Analysis Templates to arrive at a 'convergence of evidence approach'. The possible opportunities were as follows: (i) organising and simplifying complex information into an easily understood summary of evidence (i) use of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative information without prescribing a specific method (iii) transparent approach on classification and evidence use, supporting peer review (iv) basis for coordinated action and monitoring of progress.

Some possible challenges included: (i) how to reduce subjectivity in the analysis template process (ii) how to manage convergence of evidence where data problems exist (iii) the willingness of actors to engage in analysis process.

Key Issues and Recommendations:

The discussion highlighted the added value of the analysis template in providing a transparent and credible evidence base. The inclusiveness of the IPC approach was stressed as a strength in brokering technical consensus across multiple sectors. The discussion focussed broadly on the key issues proposed by WFP above. Linked to these challenges it emerged clearly that further guidance was required on the IPC analysis and interpretation and awareness on the depth and potentiality of the templates may not be high. The key technical issues were:

1. Reducing bias and subjective influences in analytical process

IPC analysis relies heavily on interpretation and technical consensus amongst a pool of experts. Currently the analysis is anchored by a number of safeguards including the referencing against international outcomes; transparency of the templates; multi-stakeholder participation and technical peer review. Further safeguards and guidance may be required.

Suggested ways forward on reducing bias and subjective influences in analytical process:

Provide more explicit guidance on overall analysis and interpretation, particularly on understanding the IPC reliability ratings.
Specify the expertise required for an IPC analysis and develop terms of references for multidisciplinary teams and cross sector inputs
Test for subjectivity in simulated/real time exercise by comparing an IPC analysis of three or more different expert groups
Define the standards required which might inform a peer review
Establish international technical clearing house at global level to validate analysis.
Consider how the IPC analysis templates could be disseminated and made more intuitive by decision makers and analysts

Review analysis templates from existing and forthcoming pilot exercises and identify lessons for future way forward

2. Convergence of evidence given data problems

The discussion covered a number of issues related to Discussion 2 on the key reference outcomes. In this discussion it emerged that the IPC analysis should be primarily concerned with convergence in the analysis of reference outcome (indicators) rather than convergence among our indicators. This resulted in a prioritisation of sound analytical conclusions backed by evidence, rather than a narrower methodological debate on weighting and thresholds. Notwithstanding this objective a number of measures were identified to facilitate convergence in the documentation of an IPC analysis.

Suggested ways forward on convergence of evidence:

Refine guidance on IPC analysis pending any changes in key reference outcomes
Develop guidance on how trend analysis can be incorporated, particularly where there is a reliance on hard and late data
Include sphere standards on quality of assessment process
Provide specific guidance on how to classify a situation on the basis of weak information e.g. low confidence indicator versus insufficient evidence category
Provide specific guidance on common analytical questions e.g. how to use old data; how to account for missing key information points (care, sanitation); issues on contextual analysis including trend analysis; magnitude; how to incorporate key food access information
Identify whether additional tools are required beyond the evidence templates for contingency and response planning e.g. FEWSNET pre-famine indicator

3. Engaging different actors in analytical process

There was broad recognition on the importance of engaging multiple actors and agencies in the analysis process. Some concerns were expressed for how this can be achieved if circumstances for engagement do not exist e.g. rapid emergency assessment.

Suggested ways forward on engaging key actors in analytical process
Establish international technical clearing house to provide guidance, validation
Set minimum partnership standards, particularly where tight timeframes will prevent engagement
Ensure all IPC analyses are based on a publicly available evidence template

Priority Areas for Technical Follow Up

- Identify whether an international technical clearing house is required and its likely function?
- Specify key areas where guidance is required on analysis and interpretation e.g. reliability scores; contextual analysis.
- Agree on minimum conditions/checks for IPC analysis i.e. (i) based on analysis template (ii) accompanied by publicly available template (iii) partnership criteria.

Communicating IPC Analysis with Maps & Population Tables

The objective of the session was to examine the role of the maps and population tables to support IPC analysis. In introducing the discussion Cindy Holleman examined the strengths and opportunities in communicating the IPC Analysis Templates with the IPC Cartographic Protocol and population tables.

The possible strengths were identified as follows: (i) cartographic protocols communicate a large amount of complex information for decision making (ii) consistent cartographic protocols enable comparability across space (regions/countries) and over time (iii) population tables provide decision makers with an estimation of the population in need of assistance.

Some possible challenges included:
Cartographic protocols are not clear on the difference between the IPC 'projection trend' and the 'early warning level', resulting in confusion on IPC time frame.
Cartographic protocols and population tables may not depict the actual severity and magnitude of a situation clearly in terms of the differentiation of the 'acute food and livelihood crisis' from a 'humanitarian emergency' phase e.g. a phase classification refers to worst possible phase; the numbers across each phase are not combined.
The project trend (Defining Attribute call box) may be lost in the overall mapping detail
There may be insufficient guidance on the estimation of population and population table protocols may be required.

Key Issues and Recommendations

The overall discussion recognised the importance of IPC analytical supporting tools and a particular need to improve the population table component. The low prominence often attached to the population tables amongst analysts and decision makers was flagged as a concern given their centrality in completing the situation analysis and their track record in informing decisions within Somalia. Based on this discussion the key issues were as follows:

1. Estimating magnitude through IPC Population Tables

IPC Population Tables aim to provide decision makers with a consistent situation analysis of the 'population in need of assistance'. However there is little guidance on how population estimates can be conducted for a particular phase. Without this an analysis may lack comparability across time and space and the overall magnitude of a situation is unclear.

Suggested way forward on estimating magnitude through IPC Population Tables
Provide further guidance on options for conducting the population estimates, without being prescriptive on any particular methods. Guidance could draw from FSAU approach which is guided by an understanding of livelihood zones, wealth groups, migration patters etc.

Identify population estimates for each 'acute food and livelihood crisis' and humanitarian emergency' phase classification and colour code the line linked to the phase colour in the defining attribute call out box.
Develop a population estimation protocol to account for key methodological estimation issues.
Provide further guidance on how to compare situations between particular phases using the population tables e.g. affected populations in phase 4 versus phase 5.
Identify total numbers of population affected in defining attribute call out box.

2. Improving presentation of IPC Cartographic Protocol

The IPC Map aims to provide a quick 'snapshot of the food security and humanitarian situation covering critical key information including severity, early warning, projected trend, magnitude, immediate/underlying causes. The map has strong communication potential, especially for the two phases AFLC and HE. Some initial country level exercises have flagged areas where the IPC map presentation could be improved.

Suggested way forward on presentation of IPC Cartographic Protocol
Review early warning line hatching / symbols, e.g. difficult to distinguish between moderate and high level risk etc; is the arrow really meaningful?
Review the added value of grid lines in map. Coordinates can be extracted by tick marks alone.
Evaluate how any changes in hatching / symbols might reduce text readability.

3. End use of the IPC Cartographic Protocol by decision makers

The IPC Cartographic Protocols have been developed with the aim of providing the most important and salient information on the food security and humanitarian situation an accessible manner on one map. The practical end use of the map by decision makers came into focus. For example, should the IPC map be used with a narrative template? Are additional maps required for different audiences? What is the primary medium of the map – print out, visual monitor?

Suggested ways forward on the end use of the IPC Cartographic Map
Provide a narrative template to accompany the IPC Cartographic Protocol
Consider formats for paper versus visual presentation; colour versus black/white
Conduct usability test to clarify different perceptions on product.
Clarify how IPC map can be used in programming / targeting / assessments e.g. WFP EFSA.

Priority Areas for Technical Follow Up

- Clarify approach to strengthen population tables.
- Review presentation aspects on IPC map.
- Consider perceptions of end users in production and understanding of IPC map.

Conclusions

Figure 1 highlights the key technical issues emerging from the IPC Online technical discussions:

Figure 1: Summary of Key Issues from IPC Online Technical Forum Discussions

Discussion 1: Overall Challenges

1. Clarifying focus of IPC – a humanitarian / food security tool, or both?
2. Combining current and future trends under one framework - Situation Analysis versus Early Warning; acute versus chronic
3. Prioritizing responses in terms of severity: The implications of a severity measurement?
4. Reducing subjectivity in process of analysis

Discussion 2: Phase Classifications and Early Warning Elements

5. The inclusion of Chronic Dimensions of Food Insecurity
6. The Phase Classification Labels and General Descriptors
7. Incorporation of future severity and its probability: early warning aspects

Discussion 3: Key Reference Outcomes

8. The adequacy and coverage of current reference outcome indicators:
9. Convergence in analysis of reference outcome indicators, not "among" indicators:
10. Baseline Information Requirements

Discussion 4: IPC Strategic Response Framework

11. Strengthening the IPC link between Situation Analysis and Response Analysis:
12. Development of Response Options Analysis Protocols

Discussion 5: IPC Analysis Templates

13. Reducing bias and subjective influences in analytical process
14. Convergence of evidence given data problems
15. Engaging different actors in analytical process

Discussion 6: IPC Analysis Templates

16. Estimating magnitude through IPC Population Tables
17. Improving presentation of IPC Cartographic Protocols
18. End use of the IPC Cartographic Protocol by decision makers

Note: Discussion 7 on Institutional Issues is not included in this preliminary technical report

Moving Forward

Drawing from the key technical issues the following priority questions are proposed for technical follow up:

- Definition of precise focus and scope of IPC: A food security and/or humanitarian classification system.
- Clarification on how to further delineate/include chronic and acute components.
- Development of early warning component.
- Clarification on the use of severity as means of classification for IPC scale.
- Are chronic factors considered within or outside of IPC framework?
- Do the labels need to be changed and if so, with what unit of measurement e.g. coping, food security, humanitarian scale?
- Can Early Warning aspects be addressed by providing greater technical guidance on broad principles and without prescribing a methodology?
- Review the adequacy and coverage of existing data and fill information gaps/weaknesses. Also, decide whether a clustering of indicators is required?
- Identify whether institutional mechanisms are required to provide technical guidance on overall IPC approach, particularly convergence in indicators.
- Clarify on how baseline information requirements are supported implicitly or explicitly through IPC work.
- Define the current areas for intervention within the current IPC Strategic Response Framework. Does this include a list of options for response that are sequenced and prioritised?
- Address management and analytical bottlenecks to devise response interventions. Does this require general guidance / specific guidance where the IPC is implemented?
- Support the development of response (options) analysis protocols? Does this take place within or outside of the current IPC approach?
- Identify whether an international technical clearing house is required and its likely function?
- Specify key areas where guidance is required on analysis and interpretation e.g. reliability scores; contextual analysis.
- Agree on minimum conditions/checks for IPC analysis i.e. (i) based on analysis template (ii) accompanied by publicly available template (iii) partnership criteria.
- Clarify approach to strengthen population tables.
- Review presentation aspects on IPC map.
- Consider perceptions of end users in production and understanding of IPC map.