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YEARS
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IPC Famine Review Committee

Terms of Reference

Updated October 2024



This Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines four aspects of the Famine Review Committee (FRC)¹, including its purpose, governance, composition, and process. This replaces the previous ToR agreed upon in 2014 by the IPC Global Steering Committee and incorporates the latest changes in protocols and processes to Famine Reviews as well as changes in the IPC governance structure. The FRC adheres to the IPC technical protocols, including those related to Famine analysis and classification². The IPC Famine preparation process and the roles and responsibilities of partner entities during a Famine Review are presented in Annex 1 and 2.

1. Role and Purpose

The FRC is an ad-hoc specialised committee consisting of a panel of internationally renowned technical experts. The committee is activated by the IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) whenever an IPC analysis team³ makes a Famine classification or if key stakeholders have concerns about the need for a Famine classification.

The purpose of the FRC is to provide independent and neutral technical feedback to the IPC analysis team on their IPC analysis results. The FRC serves as an additional quality assurance step to help ensure technical rigour and neutrality of IPC results related to Famine classifications. The FRC can promote building technical consensus in cases of disagreement within the analysis team. Overall, the FRC enhances the credibility of the IPC process and outcomes.

The primary function of the FRC is to critically review results from an analysis team and make a technical determination if the results are plausible or not.⁴ In the case where an analysis team was not able to reach a specific conclusion regarding a Famine classification due to a breakdown in consensus, the FRC may be called upon to conduct its own analytical assessment and recommendation of a Famine classification. This includes situations when the body of evidence available does not meet the minimum requirements for a Famine classification and expert judgment must be deployed to reach a decision.

Additionally, the FRC has two other functions. As part of each Famine Review, the FRC provides recommendations to stakeholders to prevent and mitigate Famine, including senior decision-makers and analysts. Also, as part of the IPC GSU's ongoing efforts to improve the IPC normative protocols, the FRC contributes to the IPC technical development processes directly related to Famine analysis.

¹ While the original name was the Emergency Review Committee, in 2017 the name was changed to the Famine Review Committee.

² Key technical reference documents include IPC Technical Manual 3.1 and IPC-Guidance-Note-on-Famine (www.ipcinfo.org)

³ 'Analysis team' refers to the group of experts who conducted an IPC analysis, which may be a Technical Working Group (TWG), an ad hoc Analysis Team, or an IPC-compatible partner agency.

⁴ As per IPC guidelines, the current standard practice of the FRC is to state that the analysis team results are 'plausible' or 'implausible', however, this terminology is currently under review and may change.

2. Governance

The FRC operates within the overall structure of the IPC as governed by the IPC Global Steering Committee while maintaining independence in its analytical functions, conclusions, and outputs. The IPC GSU serves as the chair and secretariat and provides coordination support to the FRC.

The FRC liaises with the IPC Global Programme Manager and through his/her coordination informs, briefs, or otherwise engages with other IPC bodies (IPC Global Steering Committee, IPC High-Level Executive Committee, Resource Partners, IPC Country Technical Working Groups, the IPC analysis team, and other relevant stakeholders).

FRC members do not represent their employers or any other institutions with which they are affiliated during Famine Reviews. FRC members are independent of the day-to-day implementation of the IPC programme or any organization that has a relationship to the outcomes of an IPC analysis.⁵

3. Composition

The FRC consists of international technical experts in the areas of food security, livelihoods, nutrition, and health. FRC members are expected to be completely neutral to the IPC outcomes for a given analysis and are obligated to declare any potential conflicts of interest and to recuse themselves if necessary. The participation of committee members in reviews is not fixed and can change or rotate according to needs and may increase or decrease as needed.⁶

The IPC Global Programme Manager will assign senior officers of the IPC GSU to support Famine Reviews by assisting with coordination, secretarial, or organisational tasks. As described in the IPC Special Additional Protocols for Famine Classifications,⁷ the IPC GSU Famine Review Preparation Team will provide technical support for this process.

4. Process

Activation of the FRC

The FRC is activated when at least one of the following conditions is met:

- The analysis team concludes that at least one area is classified in IPC Acute Food Insecurity (AFI) Phase 5 (Famine).
- There is a breakdown in technical consensus within the analysis team regarding possible IPC AFI Phase 5 (Famine) classification.
- The IPC GSU is aware of evidence indicating the possibility of IPC AFI Phase 5 (Famine) and chooses to activate the FRC.

⁵ Given their expertise, FRC members may be employed in an advisory capacity on normative technical development initiatives of the IPC.

⁶ May be subject to FRC members' availability or the number of areas under review.

⁷ [IPC-Guidance-Note-on-Famine.pdf \(ipcinfo.org\)](#)

- An IPC Global Partner officially requests the IPC GSU to activate it due to concerns about whether an area is in IPC Phase 5 (Famine).

Famine Reviews are mandatory for both IPC products and IPC-compatible products and are to be conducted before the analysis team releases findings.⁸

Famine Review Activities

A Famine Review includes two main steps:

STEP 1: Famine Review Preparation

The Famine Review preparation is led by the Global Support Unit with inputs from experts from IPC Global Partners who have not been involved in the IPC analysis. This review consists of a preliminary screening of the Famine classification to verify adherence to IPC protocols, preparing evidence summaries, and providing the Famine Review Committee with general recommendations. More information on this step is available in Annex 1.

STEP 2: FRC Famine Review

- **Evidence review:** FRC members review available documentation and evidence to determine if a Famine Review is feasible, considering the availability and adequacy of data, as well as the apparent level of severity. Following an induction meeting with the Famine Review Preparation Team and the initial technical consultation with the country IPC TWG or analysis team, the review process may identify data gaps or aspects needing further exploration and analysis, including possible travel to conduct field visits, face-to-face visits near the location of review, or hybrid analysis approaches should these present an added value in the Famine Review. Upon review of the available documentation and adequacy of evidence, the FRC is entitled not to conduct the Famine Review. This may occur when the available data or evidence are not sufficient to conduct the Famine Review or when there are no signs of Famine to start with, as assessed by the multi-partner review team or the FRC.
- **Technical consultations:** Consultations are held with the analysis team as well as with the Famine Review Preparation Team. The technical review process may also include consultations with key informants to further technical understanding, access additional data, and gather context information, such as from experts who recently visited the areas under review. Key Informant Interviews are organised by the IPC GSU and help ensure that a diversity of stakeholder organisations is consulted by the FRC during its review. Key Informants may include local or national government officials, country technical experts, resource partners, and others. FRC consultations and all data and analysis submitted to a Famine review remain confidential unless explicitly authorised by the key informants interviewed or organisations sharing data and analysis.
- **Analysis and conclusions:** The FRC assesses the reliability of the evidence supporting the analysis team classification, the interpretation and documentation of evidence and analysis, and the overall conclusion on phase classification and population figures. The FRC concludes whether the findings of the analysis team are plausible or implausible, and in the case where an analysis team cannot reach a technical consensus, the FRC may reach its analytical conclusions on the appropriateness of a Famine classification.

⁸ Exceptional circumstances may lead to conducting Famine Reviews after the release of the analysis team findings, based on the IPC Global Steering Committee's decision.

- **Modify analysis parameters if necessary:** As part of the review process, some analysis parameters can be subject to modification by the FRC:
 - **Geographical scope:** The FRC is entitled to enlarge, reduce, or modify the original geographical scope of the analysis (IPC analysis unit) employed by the analysis team and submitted to the FRC. This can be done when a different disaggregation is instrumental in better identifying hotspots or excluding areas not presenting the same conditions as the area under review. In addition, the FRC might decide to request access to additional data for similar or nearby areas. This applies to any area of interest that could provide useful information on the areas under analysis, areas with a risk of Famine analysis, or additional areas of concern communicated to the FRC via the IPC GSU or through other channels.
 - **Period of analysis:** The FRC is entitled to reduce or extend the original period of analysis including a projection employed by the analysis team. This can be done when a different timeframe definition is instrumental to better analyse and highlight the severity of conditions.
 - **Use of additional evidence:** During a Famine Review, evidence not employed by the analysis team might become available to the FRC. The FRC is entitled to employ all available information, provided it respects the IPC requirements in terms of time and method reliability. Any data received during technical consultations are to remain confidential and internal to the members of the FRC and are not to be publicly released or referenced, by the FRC or the IPC GSU, unless approved by its respective owner.
- **Draft the FRC report:** The FRC members contribute to the production and finalisation of the FRC report and verify the technical soundness of additional related documents that may be published alongside the FRC report upon request. The IPC report includes a conclusion on the plausibility of the Famine classification, recommendations for senior decision-makers, Resource Partners, and the Humanitarian Country Team as well as recommendations on data collection and analysis.
- **Prepare and present FRC findings:** The FRC conclusions and recommendations are communicated by the IPC Global Support Unit to the analysis team. The FRC, with the support of the IPC GSU, produces a concise presentation to be used in briefings held with the analysis team and other key stakeholders (national government or de-facto authorities, heads of agencies, UN Country Teams, regional entities, etc.). Additional briefings are usually organized with the IPC Global Steering Committee and resource partners.
- **Disseminate the FRC report:** The Famine Review concludes with the dissemination of the FRC report. The IPC GSU coordinates with the analysis team to the extent possible to align the dissemination and communication processes. The full FRC report and relevant annexes or additional material are published on the IPC webpage⁹ together with the IPC country report, whenever possible, and further circulated through existing IPC communication channels.

Once activated, the FRC is considered active until available evidence confirms that the extreme severity depicted in the previous Famine Review no longer prevails (no evidence at or above Famine thresholds and contributing factors showing signs of improvements). The analysis team

⁹ <https://www.ipcinfo.org/>



is responsible for monitoring the situation closely and producing frequent updates, with the IPC Global Support Unit when needed.

Although not a formal function of the FRC, its members might provide ad hoc support on an individual basis, to IPC activities following the publication of the FRC report or in between IPC analyses. Analysis teams are encouraged to share additional support requests or technical queries (data collection efforts, survey, or sampling design, etc.) for the FRC via IPC GSU. This is recommended when IPC Phase 5 (Famine) classifications were projected or identified from risk of Famine analyses.

Annex 1:

Consideration on IPC Famine preparation process

To prepare for the Famine Review process, **it is crucial that the analysis team at country level ensure that the analysis conclusions provided to the FRC are based on a review of evidence conducted by relevant partners operating in all the contributing sectors** (i.e., food security, nutrition, health, WASH, protection, displacement, conflict, etc.). This analysis should utilise data coming from all these sectors, including ongoing and planned response activities. If the above analysis was not conducted as part of the original IPC analysis process, partners are highly recommended to complete and document this multi-sector analysis before the Famine Review starts.

a. Set up of the multi-partner Famine Review Preparation team (FRP)

Following the notification from the IPC Global Programme Manager, and within the following 1-2 days, the IPC Global Steering Committee promptly identifies and proposes relevant technical experts or senior officers to support the IPC GSU in the Famine Review preparation process. The FRP is composed of senior officers from the IPC GSU and IPC global partners. Under the overall leadership of the IPC Global Programme Manager, the team will be composed as follows:

- At least 4 Food Security Officers and 2 Nutrition Officers from IPC Global Partners and 1 Food Security Officer and 1 Nutrition Officer from IPC GSU who are responsible for the review of analysis worksheets and completion of the Analysis Matrix for the Preparation of the FRC.
- 1 Food Security Officer from IPC GSU who will coordinate the FRC preparation, link with the TWG/AT, and inform the secretariat of the FRC Review and report preparation.

Key requirements for being part of a Famine review preparation team (FRP) are:

- Full-time availability for at least five full days and availability to respond to ad hoc requests by the FRCs during the review process.
- Being very familiar with the context in the areas under review.
- Being IPC level 3 certified or having gained extensive experience in IPC.
- Being highly familiar with IPC processes and protocols.
- To the extent possible, not having been involved in the analysis process.

b. Multi-partner Famine Review Preparation (FRP) process

The Multi-partner FRP team receive a package prepared by the IPC TWG/AT containing the following:

- The IPC worksheets for the areas to be reviewed by the FRC along with any risk of Famine exercises.
- The population estimates per IPC Phase for all areas covered by the IPC analysis.
- The area populations including any disaggregated data (HTR/accessible/inaccessible, household or demographic groups, IDPs, urban, rural etc.).
- The IPC map showing the IPC classification for all areas covered by the analysis.

- The raw data that was used to produce the Food Security related indicators as well as the raw data from Nutrition (e.g. SMART) surveys that was used in the IPC classification for the areas under review. WASH and Health information will also be requested for these areas.
- The repository of all the evidence employed in the classification of the area under review. This should include all reports and evidence employed in the analysis.
- The information regarding ongoing, planned, funded and likely to be delivered humanitarian assistance (all relevant sectors).¹⁰

The preparation work consists of organising all technical inputs and structuring the information needed by the FRC to assess the validity of the analysis results in relation to IPC Phase 5 (Famine) classifications. Using a standardised tool and process, the Famine Review Preparation will:

- Receive a briefing and induction from the IPC GSU on the Famine Review Process and the Special Additional Protocols for Famine Classifications.
- Conduct re-analysis and data quality checks of relevant datasets, reports or other available evidence and highlight limitations or concerns of the data.
- Conduct technical desk review of the IPC Acute analysis assessing Adherence to IPC protocols, evidence reliability and level as well as the convergence of evidence.
- When feasible, meet with the Analysis Team to gather contextual information and local knowledge on areas of concern and discuss any technical aspect of the IPC analysis that may need further clarification or explanation.
- Highlight missing information or main technical issues for the FRC to review.
- Prepare and present findings and recommendations to the FRC in a joint FRC/FRP induction meeting.

Induction meeting for the FRC and transfer of data

The Famine Review Preparation will organise all information and provide a brief of the work done and its conclusions to the FRC. In particular, the FRP will present their findings, technical feedback, and final recommendations regarding all areas under review, indicating to the FRC their advice on whether the areas proposed for the review deserve the attention of the FRC. However, the final decision on the feasibility of a Famine Review remains with the FRC.

Duration

The Famine Review Preparation is expected to finish this exercise within five to seven days¹¹ from the date of the FRC activation. The FRC Preparation work may be considered as concluded with the transfer of all documentation and the induction meeting, however the FRP team might be requested to remain available should the FRC feel the need to request further support.

¹¹ Depending on the number of areas under review and the timeliness of the transfer of data

Annex 2:

Additional responsibilities of the IPC Country Technical Working Group (TWG), Analysis Team (AT), IPC Global Support Unit (IPC GSU) and the IPC Global Steering Committee

The IPC Country Technical Working Group (TWG) and Analysis Teams (AT)

The TWG consists of technical representatives of food security and nutrition agencies in the country, normally from government branches, UN agencies, international and national NGOs and the civil society. The TWGs are usually chaired by a representative of a government agency which officially hosts IPC in the country. TWGs are responsible for the organisation of IPC trainings and analyses, including activities prior to, during and after the analysis, and the dissemination of the analysis findings. The Analysis Team (AT) consists of all analysts that have participated in the IPC analysis.

As part of this standard process, the TWG/AT is requested to confidentially share key information to allow the FRC to conduct the review including:

1. All analysis documentation:

- Detailed analysis conclusions for the areas under review, based on a reflection conducted by relevant partners operating in all the contributing sectors (i.e., food security, nutrition, health, WASH, protection, displacement, conflict, etc.).
- The worksheets of the areas requested to be reviewed by the FRC along with any risk of Famine exercises.
- The population estimates per IPC Phase for all areas covered by the IPC analysis.
- The area populations including any disaggregated data (HTR/accessible/inaccessible, household or demographic groups, IDPs, urban, rural etc.).
- The IPC map showing the IPC classification for all areas covered by the analysis.
- The raw data that was used to produce the Food Security related indicators as well as the raw data from Nutrition (e.g. SMART) surveys that was used in the IPC classification for the areas under review. WASH and Health reports will also be requested for these areas if available.

The repository of all the evidence employed in the classification of the area under review.

- This should include all reports and evidence employed in the analysis. Any additional report from any partners or from the AT supporting better contextualization will be welcome.

2. Assessment or survey information:

- Information on surveys beyond the sampling, such as enumerator training, supervision, duration, access constraints, focal points, etc.
- Full documentation of relevant reports or materials (such as MUAC mass screening reports) in addition to the raw data.
- Maps or geographic coordinates of assessment sampling.

3. Information regarding Humanitarian Food Assistance and assistance in other sectors, including assistance ongoing at the time of data collection (for the main surveys), the ongoing response and the planned, funded, and likely deliverable assistance in all relevant sectors (Food security, nutrition, wash, health, protection, etc.). For the Humanitarian Food Assistance, the information should be provided in line with the HFA guidance note, namely including:

- Actual tonnage distribution, KCal calculations.
- Typology of beneficiaries.
- Targeting method and possible exclusion errors.
- Any disruption in access to the intended beneficiaries.
- If available, PDM reports.

Specific responsibilities of the TWG/AT with regards to the Famine Review process:

- Adhere to IPC Special Additional Protocols for Famine Classifications and IPC Famine Guidance note.
- Prepare and share required documentation needed for FRC review.
- Organizes technical or induction meetings for the FRP and the FRC.
- Assists in the identification of key informants for confidential consultations by the FRC
- Reviews and considers the FRC conclusions and recommendations.
- Support the FRC results presentation and dissemination by organising meeting(s) with the TWG/AT and other relevant country stakeholders before the findings are finalised and released.

The IPC Global Support Unit (IPC GSU)

The IPC GSU is the operational arm of the IPC Global Steering Committee. Hosted at FAO, the IPC GSU is in charge of promoting the IPC within global decision-making structures and developing and updating IPC protocols and technical guidance based on inputs from the Technical Advisory Group. It also provides capacity development and technical support to countries, as well as quality assurance oversight, among other things.

Specific responsibilities of the IPC GSU with regards to the Famine Review process:

- IPC Global Programme Manager of the IPC GSU activates and chairs the IPC FRC.
- Provides coordination support to the FRC, including the collection of the documents required for the FRC review; schedule and convene meetings, teleconferences and videoconferences along with other secretarial or logistic support.
- Coordinates the multi-partner Famine review preparation team review.
- Provides technical inputs to the FRC review process and conduct all requested data reanalysis.

- Supports the drafting of the FRC Report and produce the FRC report annexes;
- Organises debriefings with key stakeholders at global level.
- Publishes the FRC findings on the IPC webpage.
- Consolidates and coordinates relevant communication on behalf of the FRC.

The IPC Global Steering Committee

The IPC Global Steering Committee is the governing body of the IPC Global partnership, tasked with strategically guiding and positioning the IPC globally and linking with relevant initiatives. 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 principles of operation.

Specific responsibilities of the IPC Global Steering Committee with regards to the Famine Review process:

- Liaises with own agency offices at the regional and country level in support of the process, specifically identify candidates for the multi-partner review team;
- Maintains all information regarding the FRC process confidential until the release.

The IPC Global Partners



IPC Funding Partners

