



Towards ensuring food security in protracted crises: recommended actions

Countries in protracted crisis are characterized by long-lasting or recurring crises and conflict, extensive breakdown of livelihoods and very little institutional capacity to respond. As a result, the proportion of undernourished people in countries in protracted crisis (excluding China and India) is three times as high as it is in other developing countries. About one-fifth of the world's estimated 925 million undernourished people live in the 22 countries currently considered to be in protracted crisis. Because of the distinctive features of protracted crises, appropriate responses differ from those required in short-term crises or in non-crisis development contexts. Countries in protracted crisis thus need to be considered as a special category with special requirements in terms of interventions by the development community.

The findings presented in *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010* lead to three main sets of recommendations for addressing food insecurity in protracted crises:

- improving analysis and understanding;
- improving support for livelihoods and food security; and
- reforming the “architecture” of assistance.

■ Improving analysis and understanding

While protracted crises have some general characteristics in common, the case studies considered in this report make it clear that each crisis has its own context-specific characteristics. Each case is different and responses – whether internal or external – must be tailored to the specifics of each case. Identification of appropriate responses is often hobbled by poor or non-existent data. With the exception of a few high-profile crises, data are often lacking or of poor quality, making it difficult to understand the dynamics of protracted crises.

Current understanding of protracted crises remains superficial and narrow. While humanitarian emergencies clearly require rapid assessments of needs, protracted crises require analysis that is both broader and deeper.

An in-depth understanding of livelihoods, gender dynamics, the social context and local and national institutions is required not only to address the critical constraints to livelihoods at the household level but also to understand the underlying causes of the crisis. And better analysis is needed to understand the nuances of livelihood adaptations in protracted crises, some of which can be built upon by external actors (e.g. remittances and changes in local institutions governing property rights in land and natural resources), and some of which should be mitigated (e.g. over-exploitation of natural resources).

The ability to compare the severity of crisis across different contexts is important to reduce the risks of uneven aid allocation and the related “forgotten-crisis” syndrome. This is an area in which good progress has been made, but this progress needs to be expanded – particularly in countries in protracted crises. An emerging approach to this is the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) (see Box 12). One distinguishing feature of the IPC is that its development is the result of collaboration between several agencies that does not replace existing analytical tools or other food security analysis efforts but complements them through a transparent and partnership-based approach.

Progress has also been made in improving the match between assessed needs, analysis of underlying causes and proposed assistance, but much of this effort is still in the pilot stage and too often responses still jump straight to implementing “tried and true” interventions in a protracted crisis. But these are often the wrong form of assistance and have little impact.¹⁰²

Similarly, assessment of the impact of both external interventions and local responses to protracted crises has improved, but many donors and agencies are still reluctant to invest in impact assessment, as well as in response analysis, to the required extent. Impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems and learning and accountability mechanisms all need to be strengthened if we are to improve the way in which we respond to food security in protracted crises.

BOX 12

**Improving food security analysis and decision-making:
The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification**

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a tool for improving the rigour, transparency, relevance and comparability of food security analysis. It was originally developed for use in 2004 in Somalia by FAO's Food Security Analysis Unit, but has since been applied in a number of other food-security contexts through joint efforts with WFP and other partners.

The IPC includes five protocols:

- **Severity classification and early warning** to enable comparison of data from place to place and over time
- **Evidence-based analysis** to document key evidence in support of the classification of the food security situation
- **Linking to response** to provide general guidance on the appropriate response for various levels of food insecurity
- **Core communication** to consolidate essential conclusions for decision-makers in an accessible and consistent format, and
- **Technical consensus** to ensure key stakeholders from government, NGO, UN and academic agencies concur with the technical findings of the analysis.

By following the IPC protocols, complex food-security analysis is made more accessible and meaningful for decision-makers at national, regional and global levels. It informs decisions on resource prioritization, programme

design and advocacy to mitigate acute and chronic food insecurity. Implementing the IPC strengthens existing institutions and provides a platform for sharing information and enabling diverse national and international stakeholders to work together and build consensus over food security analysis.

In Somalia, for example, the IPC has been in use since 2004 and has helped ensure that the humanitarian response is targeted to people most in need and, equally importantly, that the protracted crisis is not “forgotten” by the international community. In Kenya – a more developmental context – the IPC has been in use since 2005 and provides a common platform for various line ministries to share information and develop joint analysis at national and district levels under the coordination of the Office of the President. Currently, the IPC is at varying stages of implementation (from initial awareness-raising to official adoption) in over 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The IPC Global Support Programme provides demand-driven technical support and normative development for the IPC. It is managed by an interagency Steering Committee with representatives from CARE, FAO, FEWS NET, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK and USA, and WFP. In 2010, regional governmental bodies and other UN/NGO agencies will also be encouraged to join.

Improving support to livelihoods for food security

Responses that save lives are indispensable, but in countries in protracted crisis there is a need to move towards improving support for livelihoods, social protection and risk reduction while retaining the capacity and flexibility of responding to acute crises.

Livelihoods assessments must take into account key dynamics of local institutions (including power and conflict dynamics) in order to better understand the drivers of crisis and identify adequate forms of assistance as well as trustworthy and sustainable partners to address long-term needs. The examples drawn from Sierra Leone and the Sudan demonstrate that external assistance can either be helpful or harmful – depending on how livelihoods dynamics are understood and must recognize and support livelihood innovations on the ground while deterring maladaptive practices relied on by populations under extreme duress.

One critical means of promoting livelihoods over the longer term is to support informal institutions that underpin local livelihood security. Responses that directly protect lives and livelihoods should thus take place in parallel with forms of assistance that support local institutions dealing with longer-term needs in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management (e.g. land tenure, as illustrated in the case of customary institutions in Mozambique) and the provision of basic social services (e.g. rural infrastructure, education, health and nutrition). This can also contribute to state-building processes, particularly in those extreme cases where state capacity is very limited.

Reforming the “architecture” of assistance

The experiences described in the preceding chapters of this report show that there is a gap between the reality on the ground in protracted crises and the architecture of international assistance in place to address protracted crises. Recognition of this gap is not new; indeed, a global forum of

RECOMMENDATION 1**Support further analysis and deeper understanding of people's livelihoods and coping mechanisms in protracted crises in order to strengthen their resilience and enhance the effectiveness of assistance programmes**

- Donors and agencies must invest more in analysis, impact assessment and lessons learning in protracted crisis situations. This includes both financial and human resources.
- Information systems should be strengthened and expanded. Assessment of humanitarian needs is critical, but analysis must also be broadened to include livelihoods and local and national institutions, which can support livelihoods, but may also be at the heart of the causes of protracted crises.
- Response analysis must be improved, building capacities in both production and use of better-informed analysis of options for assistance.
- The ability to compare needs across different and varied contexts must continue to improve in order to enhance aid allocation and prevent the "forgotten crisis" syndrome.
- The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) should regularly monitor and discuss the overall situation in countries in protracted crisis.

RECOMMENDATION 2**Support the protection, promotion and rebuilding of livelihoods, and the institutions that support and enable livelihoods, in countries in protracted crisis**

- Governments, donors and agencies should better link responses that address both short- and longer-term needs through improved food assistance, social protection and investments in agriculture as well as non-agricultural livelihoods.
- Provisioning, protection and longer-term promotion of livelihoods should be stepped up using a variety of instruments that support people's resilience and address vulnerability (e.g. safety nets, nutritional support, and developing people's capacity to produce and acquire food). Gender differences should be duly recognized.
- Support for livelihoods must build on existing capacity and should strengthen positive livelihood adaptations in specific contexts while preventing and/or mitigating maladaptive strategies.
- Efforts should focus on helping to rebuild and/or promote local institutions that support livelihoods.

UN organizations, NGOs and the Red Cross movement addressed many of these issues in 2008 (see Box 13).

The findings of the 2008 conference are even more urgent today – particularly in protracted crises. Part of the need to improve aid architecture is to better bridge the gap between classic approaches to "relief" (or humanitarian response) and "development". The ways donors currently classify humanitarian and development activities do not match – or account for – the diversity of interventions being undertaken or the array of local responses to protracted crises. External forms of assistance are inadequately described by either these labels or the time-frames presumed to correspond to them. Donors should allocate – and account for – funding according to assessed need and programming opportunities, with the requisite resources for responding to conditions in protracted crises.

Progress has been made in some of these areas. WFP and FAO are leading the process to establish a Global Food Security Cluster to ensure a more coherent, predictable and comprehensive response to food insecurity within a

humanitarian context (see pages 40–43). The cluster would provide a forum at the international level to inform and support the elaboration of emergency strategies and implementation plans at the country level that integrate urgent measures to address food availability, food production, food access and food utilization concerns. It would also provide a crucial improvement in the coherence in the overall approach and in integrating saving lives and protecting livelihoods in the humanitarian context. However, the role of the Global Food Security Cluster in protracted crises is yet to be defined.

Incremental improvements have been made in strengthening evaluation and learning mechanisms and analytical approaches, such as the IPC. But many of these recommendations have yet to be fully implemented. A major challenge relates to leading and coordinating interventions in the absence of a capable and willing national government. Part of an integrated approach to reducing food insecurity has to be to support the development of governmental capacity in technical

RECOMMENDATION 3

Revisit the architecture of external assistance in protracted crises to match the needs, challenges and institutional constraints on the ground. This could entail the organization of a High-Level Forum on protracted crises followed by the development of a new “Agenda for Action” for countries in protracted crisis

- The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) should support the organization of a High-Level Forum on Protracted Crises no later than 2012 to discuss the state of knowledge on protracted crises and suggest the way forward.
- A new “Agenda for action in protracted crises” should be developed in order to establish new principles and parameters to address effectively and efficiently the specific needs of these countries. It is proposed that the process is launched and monitored by the CFS.
- Modalities of assistance should move beyond the traditional categories of “relief” and “development” to a more diversified approach that includes social protection mechanisms, food security early warning systems, disaster preparedness, environmental protection and rehabilitation, and building livelihoods resilience.
- Donor planning should emphasize predictability for prevention, early action and long-term solutions.
- Tracking systems for aid flows should be fine-tuned and move beyond the traditional division between humanitarian and development assistance to allow a more transparent tracking of investments supporting food security.
- Efforts must be made to help support all actors – donors, host governments, non-state actors, national and international NGOs and crisis-affected communities – in the crafting of the principles that should govern assistance in protracted crises.

BOX 13

Findings of the global conference on “Rethinking Food Security in Humanitarian Response”

In April 2008, organizations of the United Nations, NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (RCRC) met to discuss food security in humanitarian response. The three-day forum was convened by CARE and Oxfam at FAO headquarters in Rome. Though aimed more broadly than only countries in protracted crisis, the forum identified two key areas of action underlying changes needed in how the aid system should approach food security and how it can substantially improve its effectiveness in addressing hunger:

- The need to bridge the relief-development divide:
 - Promoting long-term social protection as a key approach
 - Incorporating disaster risk reduction into social protection frameworks
 - Giving increased attention to sustainable agriculture
 - Promoting the funding of prevention and early action.
- The importance of a common, integrated approach to understanding and responding to hunger and vulnerability:
 - Developing a common analytical and programmatic framework for food security
 - Using more appropriate needs-based responses and programme interventions.

The Forum recommended that these two key areas of action be supported by fundamental changes in the architecture of international assistance in food security.

The changes needed include:

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation, learning and accountability mechanisms
- Improving capacity for analysis to inform policy, programmes and responses
- Ensuring that aid agencies are fit for purpose by reviewing their programme portfolios, funding mechanisms, staffing and structure and making needed changes according to identified gaps and in line with the roles defined in the common framework
- Establishing food security coordination mechanisms to bring together aid agencies across relief, transition and development, and those that are involved in the different elements of food and nutrition security.

Source: Summarized from the final communiqué of the forum, “Rethinking the International Aid System’s Approach to Food Security”. Output from the International Food Security Forum, 16-18 April 2008, Rome. CARE/ Oxfam/ FAO/ WFP.

ministries to lead and coordinate efforts, but this will be difficult in civil conflict situations.

Responses in the same context by the same agencies are now often simultaneously intended to address humanitarian needs, livelihood protection and promotion, institution-building and, in some cases, security objectives. As a result, principles governing activities in the field are increasingly unclear. Humanitarian agencies decry the undermining of humanitarian principles, and the

undermining of these principles has led to increased difficulty in access to populations in need in some crises as well as contributing to declining security of aid workers (see pages 32–35). The objectives of external assistance in protracted crises, and the principles governing the allocation, distribution and impact assessment of such assistance must be clarified if food insecurity specifically, and humanitarian and development objectives more generally, are to be successfully addressed.