

# The Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification



Technical Manual  
Version 1





# Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification: Technical Manual Version I

Draft version

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## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since 1994 FSAU has invested considerable energy to improve the rigour of the unit's food security, nutrition, and livelihoods analysis, and its relevance for decision making. To help meet these goals of rigor and relevance, since February 2004 FSAU has been developing and using a tool called the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification (IPC). In addition to consistently improving analysis and facilitating effective response in the context of Somalia, there are strong indications that the IPC is relevant on a wider scale, as it serves as a 'common currency' for food security and humanitarian analysis.

This manual provides technical guidance to the use of IPC among FSAU analysts and technical partners, and will hopefully contribute to on-going global efforts to standardize core elements of humanitarian analysis and response (e.g., the SMART, Benchmarking, Needs Analysis Framework, Humanitarian Tracking Service, and Sphere Project).

The IPC builds from aspects of many existing classification systems and academic literature. The practical strength of the IPC, however, is that it was developed through the every day realities of conducting food security analysis and linking it to action within the context of a complex emergency. In addition, the IPC development has benefited from technical feedback of expert practitioners and high level decision makers through dozens of forums in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the USA. Appendix 7.1 lists just some of these meetings, for whom we are extremely grateful for their technical input.

Within FSAU the IPC has been an on-going technical dialogue among all of our Nairobi based analysts including: Noreen Prendiville, Cindy Holleman, Yusuf Mohamed, Ali Duale, Thomas Gabrielle, Simon Narbeth, Veena Sampathkumar, Zainab Jama, James Kingori, Sicily Matu, Ahono Busili, Bernard Owadi, Tom Oguta, Achoka Luduba, Carol Kingori, and Francis Barasa. FSAU has a close partnership with FEWS NET Somalia, and both Mohamed Aw-Dahir and Sidow Addou have been directly involved in the IPC development. FSAU field staff has also made substantial input. Special thanks to Cindy, Noreen, Thomas, and Veena for their technical editing of this manual.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ACF</b>	Action Contra la Faim
<b>ALRMP</b>	Arid Lands Resource Management Project
<b>AP</b>	Associated Press
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CAP</b>	Consolidated Appeals Process
<b>CDC</b>	Center for Disease Control
<b>CILSS</b>	Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
<b>CMR</b>	Crude Mortality Rate
<b>CNN</b>	Cable News Network
<b>CSI</b>	Coping Strategies Index
<b>DFID</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EFNA</b>	Emergency Food Needs Assessment
<b>FANTA</b>	USAID Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
<b>FAO</b>	UN - Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FAQs</b>	Frequently Asked Questions
<b>FEG</b>	Food Economy Group
<b>FEWS NET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network.
<b>FIVIMS</b>	Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems
<b>FNPP</b>	FAO/Netherlands Partnership Programme
<b>FSAS</b>	Food Security Analysis System
<b>FSAU</b>	Food Security Analysis Unit - Somalia
<b>GAM</b>	Global Acute Malnutrition
<b>GHA</b>	Greater Horn of Africa
<b>GIEWS</b>	Global Information Early Warning System
<b>HEA</b>	Household Economy Approach
<b>HPG</b>	Humanitarian Policy Group
<b>IASC</b>	UN Inter-agency Standing Committee
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification
<b>IRIN</b>	Integrated Regional Information Networks
<b>Kcal</b>	Kilo calories
<b>LRRD</b>	Linking Relief, Recovery, and Development
<b>LUCC</b>	Land Use and Land Cover Change
<b>MSF</b>	Medecins Sans Frontieres
<b>MUAC</b>	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
<b>NAF</b>	Needs Analysis Framework
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>SCF - UK</b>	Save the Children – United Kingdom
<b>SCN - UN</b>	UN Standing Committee on Nutrition
<b>SENAC</b>	Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity
<b>SLA</b>	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
<b>SMART</b>	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
<b>UN/OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UNAIDS</b>	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>VOA</b>	Voice of America
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WFS</b>	World Food Summit





## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the cross-cutting fields of food security and humanitarian analysis there are increasingly strong calls for improved analysis, including: greater **comparability** of results from one place to another, increased rigour, greater **transparency** of evidence to support findings, increased **relevance** to strategic decision making, and stronger linkages between information and **action**. Improving analysis along these lines would enable food security and humanitarian interventions to be more **needs-based, strategic, and timely**.

Central to meeting these challenges is the development of a classification system that is **generic** enough to be utilized in a vast array of food security situations, disaster types, and livelihood systems; **simple** enough to be practical in the field and understandable by multiple stakeholders; and **rigorous** enough to meet international standards.

Since February 2004 the Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSAU1) has been using and progressively developing a tool to meet these challenges called the **Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification (IPC2)**. Drawing from extensive literature on international humanitarian guidelines, aspects of existing classification systems, and in situ analysis of food security in Somalia, the IPC has consistently proven to improve analysis and enable more effective response.

The IPC is a set of protocols for consolidating and summarizing **Situation Analysis**, a distinct, yet often overlooked (or assumed) stage of the food security analysis-response continuum. Situation Analysis is a foundation stage where fundamental aspects (severity, causes, magnitude, etc) of a situation are identified—aspects for which there is optimally broad-based consensus by key stakeholders including governments, UN and NGO agencies, donors, the media, and target communities.

The analytical logic of the IPC is that varying phases of food security and humanitarian situations are classified based on outcomes on lives and livelihoods. Outcomes are a function of both immediate hazard events and underlying causes, as well as the specific vulnerabilities of livelihood systems (including both livelihood assets and livelihood strategies). The outcomes are referenced against internationally accepted standards, and their convergence substantiates a phase classification for any given area. Each phase is associated with a unique strategic response framework, while the outcome configuration for any given situation guides the creation of a tailored response unique to that situation. While the phase classification describes the current or imminent situation for a given area, early warning risk levels are a predictive tool to communicate the risk of a worsening phase.

The IPC consists of four components including the **Reference Table, Analysis Templates, Cartographic Protocols** and **Population Tables**.

The IPC **Reference Table** guides analysis for both the **Phase Classification** and **Early Warning Risk Levels**. The Phase Classification is divided into five **Phases**—*Generally Food Secure, Chronically Food Insecure, Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis, Humanitarian Emergency, and Famine/Humanitarian Catastrophe*. The five phases are general enough to accommodate a wide range of causes, livelihood systems, and political/economic contexts—yet their distinction captures essential differences in implications for action (including strategic design, urgency, and ethical imperative).

Each Phase is linked to a comprehensive set of **Key Reference Outcomes** on human welfare and livelihoods which guide the classification. These include: *crude mortality rate, acute malnutrition, disease, food access/availability, dietary diversity, water access/availability, destitution and displacement, civil security, coping, and livelihood assets*. The breadth of outcomes enables triangulation and ensures adaptability of the IPC to a wide variety of situations. Referencing the outcomes to international standards ensures comparability and consistency of the phase classification in different countries and contexts.

Each Phase is also linked to a tailored **Strategic Response Framework** that provides strategic, non-prescriptive guidance to achieve three objectives: (1) mitigate immediate negative outcomes, (2) support livelihoods, and (3) address underlying/structural causes.

The Reference Table also includes three **Early Warning Risk Levels**: (1) *Alert*, (2) *Moderate Risk*, (3) *High Risk*. Each of these is associated with key information required for effective early warning: Probability, Severity, Reference Indicators, Implications for Action, and Timeline

The **Analysis Templates** are tables which organize key pieces of information in a transparent manner. They facilitate analysis to substantiate a Phase Classification and guide response analysis. The **Cartographic Protocols** are a set of standardized mapping and visual communication conventions which are designed to effectively convey key information concerning situation analysis on a single map. The **Population Tables** are a means to consistently and effectively

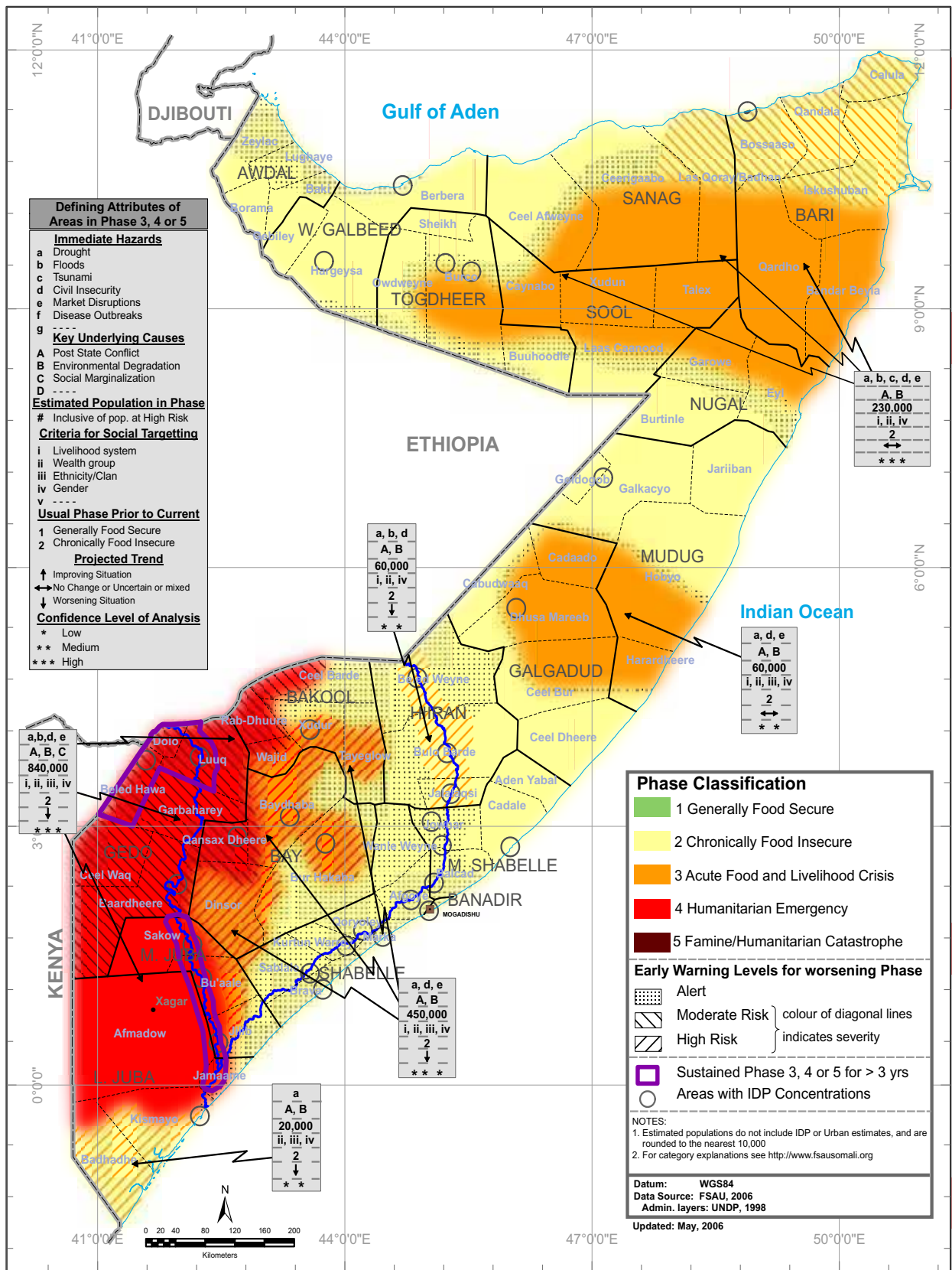
**Table 1: Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification Reference Table**

Phase Classification		Key Reference Outcomes <i>(current or imminent outcomes on lives and livelihoods; based on convergence of evidence)</i>	Strategic Response Framework <i>(mitigate immediate outcomes, support livelihoods, and address underlying/structural causes)</i>
1	Generally Food Secure	<p><b>Crude Mortality Rate</b> &lt; 0.5 / 10,000 / day</p> <p><b>Acute Malnutrition</b> &lt;3 % (w/h &lt;-2 z-scores)</p> <p><b>Stunting</b> &lt;20% (h/age &lt;-2 z-scores)</p> <p><b>Food Access/ Availability</b> usually adequate (&gt; 2,100 kcal ppp day), stable</p> <p><b>Dietary Diversity</b> consistent quality and quantity of diversity</p> <p><b>Water Access/Avail.</b> usually adequate (&gt; 15 litres ppp day), stable</p> <p><b>Hazards</b> moderate to low probability and vulnerability</p> <p><b>Civil Security</b> prevailing and structural peace</p> <p><b>Livelihood Assets</b> generally sustainable utilization (of 5 capitals)</p>	<p>Strategic assistance to pockets of food insecure groups</p> <p>Investment in food and economic production systems</p> <p>Enable development of livelihood systems based on principles of sustainability, justice, and equity</p> <p>Prevent emergence of structural hindrances to food security</p> <p>Advocacy</p>
2	Chronically Food Insecure	<p><b>Crude Mortality Rate</b> &lt;0.5/10,000/day; U5MR&lt;1/10,000/day</p> <p><b>Acute Malnutrition</b> &gt;3% but &lt;10 % (w/h &lt;-2 z-score), usual range, stable</p> <p><b>Stunting</b> &gt;20% (h/age &lt;-2 z-scores)</p> <p><b>Food Access/ Availability</b> borderline adequate (2,100 kcal ppp day); unstable</p> <p><b>Dietary Diversity</b> chronic dietary diversity deficit</p> <p><b>Water Access/Avail.</b> borderline adequate (15 litres ppp day); unstable</p> <p><b>Hazards</b> recurrent, with high livelihood vulnerability</p> <p><b>Civil Security</b> Unstable; disruptive tension</p> <p><b>Coping</b> 'insurance strategies'</p> <p><b>Livelihood Assets</b> stressed and unsustainable utilization (of 5 capitals)</p> <p><b>Structural</b> Pronounced underlying hindrances to food security</p>	<p>Design &amp; implement strategies to increase stability, resistance and resilience of livelihood systems, thus reducing risk</p> <p>Provision of 'safety nets' to high risk groups</p> <p>Interventions for optimal and sustainable use of livelihood assets</p> <p>Create contingency plan</p> <p>Redress structural hindrances to food security</p> <p>Close monitoring of relevant outcome and process indicators</p> <p>Advocacy</p>
3	Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis	<p><b>Crude Mortality Rate</b> 0.5-1 /10,000/day, U5MR 1-2/10,000/dy</p> <p><b>Acute Malnutrition</b> 10-15 % (w/h &lt;-2 z-score), &gt; than usual, increasing</p> <p><b>Disease</b> epidemic; increasing</p> <p><b>Food Access/ Availability</b> lack of entitlement; 2,100 kcal ppp day via asset stripping</p> <p><b>Dietary Diversity</b> acute dietary diversity deficit</p> <p><b>Water Access/Avail.</b> 7.5-15 litres ppp day, accessed via asset stripping</p> <p><b>Destitution/Displacement</b> emerging; diffuse</p> <p><b>Civil Security</b> limited spread, low intensity conflict</p> <p><b>Coping</b> 'crisis strategies'; CSI &gt; than reference; increasing</p> <p><b>Livelihood Assets</b> accelerated and critical depletion or loss of access</p>	<p>Support livelihoods and protect vulnerable groups</p> <p>Strategic and complimentary interventions to immediately ↑ food access/availability AND support livelihoods</p> <p>Selected provision of complimentary sectoral support (e.g., water, shelter, sanitation, health, etc.)</p> <p>Strategic interventions at community to national levels to create, stabilize, rehabilitate, or protect priority livelihood assets</p> <p>Create or implement contingency plan</p> <p>Close monitoring of relevant outcome and process indicators</p> <p>Use 'crisis as opportunity' to redress underlying structural causes</p> <p>Advocacy</p>
4	Humanitarian Emergency	<p><b>Crude Mortality Rate</b> 1-2 / 10,000 / day, &gt;2x reference rate, increasing; U5MR &gt; 4/10,000/day</p> <p><b>Acute Malnutrition</b> &gt;15 % (w/h &lt;-2 z-score), &gt; than usual, increasing</p> <p><b>Disease</b> pandemic</p> <p><b>Food Access/ Availability</b> severe entitlement gap; unable to meet 2,100 kcal ppp day</p> <p><b>Dietary Diversity</b> Regularly 2-3 or fewer main food groups consumed</p> <p><b>Water Access/Avail.</b> &lt; 7.5 litres ppp day (human usage only)</p> <p><b>Destitution/Displacement</b> concentrated; increasing</p> <p><b>Civil Security</b> widespread, high intensity conflict</p> <p><b>Coping</b> 'distress strategies'; CSI significantly &gt; than reference</p> <p><b>Livelihood Assets</b> near complete &amp; irreversible depletion or loss of access</p>	<p>Urgent protection of vulnerable groups</p> <p>Urgently ↑ food access through complimentary interventions</p> <p>Selected provision of complimentary sectoral support (e.g., water, shelter, sanitation, health, etc.)</p> <p>Protection against complete livelihood asset loss and/or advocacy for access</p> <p>Close monitoring of relevant outcome and process indicators</p> <p>Use 'crisis as opportunity' to redress underlying structural causes</p> <p>Advocacy</p>
5	Famine / Humanitarian Catastrophe	<p><b>Crude Mortality Rate</b> &gt; 2/10,000 /day (example: 6,000 /1,000,000 /30 days)</p> <p><b>Acute Malnutrition</b> &gt; 30 % (w/h &lt;-2 z-score)</p> <p><b>Disease</b> pandemic</p> <p><b>Food Access/ Availability</b> extreme entitlement gap; much below 2,100 kcal ppp day</p> <p><b>Water Access/Avail.</b> &lt; 4 litres ppp day (human usage only)</p> <p><b>Destitution/Displacement</b> large scale, concentrated</p> <p><b>Civil Security</b> widespread, high intensity conflict</p> <p><b>Livelihood Assets</b> effectively complete loss; collapse</p>	<p>Critically urgent protection of human lives and vulnerable groups</p> <p>Comprehensive assistance with basic needs (e.g. food, water, shelter, sanitation, health, etc.)</p> <p>Immediate policy/legal revisions where necessary</p> <p>Negotiations with varied political-economic interests</p> <p>Use 'crisis as opportunity' to redress underlying structural causes</p> <p>Advocacy</p>

**Early Warning**

Early Warning Levels	Probability / Likelihood <i>(of worsening Phase)</i>	Severity <i>(of worsening phase)</i>	Reference Hazards and Vulnerabilities	Implications for Action
<b>Alert</b>	As yet unclear	Not applicable	<p><b>Hazard:</b> occurrence of, or predicted event stressing livelihoods; with low or uncertain vulnerability</p> <p><b>Process Indicators:</b> small negative change from normal</p>	Close monitoring and analysis
<b>Moderate Risk</b>	Elevated probability / likelihood	Specified by predicted Phase Class, and as indicated by color of diagonal lines on map.	<p><b>Hazard:</b> occurrence of, or predicted event stressing livelihoods; with moderate vulnerability</p> <p><b>Process Indicators:</b> large negative change from normal</p>	<p>Close monitoring and analysis</p> <p>Contingency planning</p> <p>Step-up current Phase interventions</p>
<b>High Risk</b>	High probability; 'more likely than not'		<p><b>Hazard:</b> occurrence of, or strongly predicted major event stressing livelihoods; with high vulnerability</p> <p><b>Process Indicators:</b> large and compounding negative changes</p>	<p>Preventative interventions—with increased urgency for High Risk populations</p> <p>Advocacy</p>

Map 1: Somalia Situation Analysis, Post Deyr 2005/06 Projection, January 2006 through June 2006



communicate population estimates by administrative boundaries, livelihood systems, and livelihood types.

The IPC is not an assessment method, per se, but a classification system and a set of protocols for Situation Analysis that integrate multiple data sources, methods, and analyses (options for specific assessment methodologies include those endorsed by WFP, ICRC, Save the Children UK, and many others). Effective use of the IPC encourages a mixed-method approach which is obligatory given the complexity of the analysis and the need for triangulation. In this manner, the IPC provides a consistent and meaningful structure to the final statement. To substantiate an IPC statement, whatever the specific methodologies used, the legitimacy of data sources and analytical methods is rigorously evaluated and reflected in the overall confidence level.

The IPC does not replace existing food security information systems or methodologies. It is a complimentary “add-on” that draws from and provides focus to existing analytical systems, enables comparability, and explicitly links analysis to action. The IPC can be adapted to a broad range of information systems with regards to data availability, methodological approach, and human capacity.

The IPC emphasizes food security analysis through a livelihoods approach, but recognizes that it is impossible to separate food insecurity from associated sectoral crises in the fields of health, water, protection, sanitation, shelter, and others. There is highly dynamic interplay between these sectors; deteriorating situations often co-exist, and stress on one most likely leads to stresses on others.

Thus, the IPC emphasizes food security analysis while integrating related humanitarian concerns. The IPC is not meant, however, to substitute for more refined analysis of any particular sector.

The IPC draws together and seeks to integrate:

- aspects of existing classification systems
- the breadth of food security phases, not just emergency situations
- food security and nutrition
- *lives and livelihoods*
- process indicators and outcomes
- *information and action*
- relief, rehabilitation, recovery, and development
- immediate and longer term perspectives
- concepts and practice
- academic standards and field practicalities
- accountability of analysis and response

*Perhaps most importantly, the IPC provides a much needed **common currency** for food security and humanitarian analysis.*

Both within Somalia and the Greater Horn of Africa, the IPC has proven to be an effective means for communicating complex analysis to UN, NGO and government agencies, donors and media. It has been consistently demonstrated to increase technical consensus, comparability over space and time, transparency through evidence-based analysis, accountability, as well as the effectiveness of early warning and strategic response.

In the context of the FSAU, the IPC fits within the overall conceptual, operational, and analytic framework of the Food Security Analysis System (FSAS), as a means of conducting multi-faceted aspects of food security analysis through a livelihoods and evidence-based approach<sup>3</sup> (see diagram in Appendix C).

The highly dynamic and complex nature of food security analysis in the context of Somalia has provided a vibrant “developing-ground” for the IPC—with multiple livelihood systems ranging from cropping to fishing to pastoralism, and a variety of hazards ranging from floods to drought to civil insecurity to the Tsunami (FSAU 2005). Most importantly, the IPC has been developed in-situ—drawing from academic literature and international guidelines, but driven first and foremost by the realities of conducting food security analysis on a day-to-day basis and linking information to action (see Appendix D).

Overall, this technical manual has three main objectives:

- (1) to provide technical guidance on the use of the IPC for food security and humanitarian analysis

- (2) to contribute to global developments related to improving and standardizing food security and humanitarian analysis
- (3) to solicit feedback on the current IPC Version 1 from the broad food security and humanitarian community so as to inform the development of an anticipated next version of the manual.

The manual begins with a discussion of why a common classification system is needed as well as a brief review of existing classification systems. The manual next provides technical details of the concepts and practice of using the IPC, and ends with a discussion on the potential for broader applicability of the IPC to other country, regional, and global contexts and future challenges.

At FSAU the IPC has been revised and improved in many versions<sup>4</sup> based on an iterative development process which has been supported by dozens of presentations and feedback from hundreds of food security professionals (Appendix 7.1).

Although the IPC has proven useful in the present form, it is certain that there will be more iteration, and it is hoped that this paper will solicit feedback for further development.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> FSAU is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and funded by the European Commission (EC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

<sup>2</sup> IPC is a short-hand acronym including the terms integrated phase classification.

<sup>3</sup> FSAU's Food Security Analysis System (FSAS) is an overarching framework to integrate conceptual, analytical, and operational components of food security analysis through a livelihoods approach. Core analytical components of the FSAS include: Baseline Livelihoods Analysis, Seasonal Food Security Projections, Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessments, Key Indicator Monitoring, Nutrition Analysis, and Applied Research. Other core components include: Information Management System, Communication Strategy, Management, and Partner Networking. Core analytical sectors include: climate, agriculture, livestock, markets, nutrition, and civil security (FSAU 2004b). For more details visit [www.fsausomali.org](http://www.fsausomali.org)

<sup>4</sup> For previous versions of the IPC tool see FSAU Technical Series IV.2/3/4/7/8 and for previous citations see Howe and Devereux (2004), Young et al. (2005), Heimrich (2005), and Field Exchange (2006).

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 The Need for a Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification System

Based on a global review of needs assessment practice, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) HPG Report “According to Need? - Needs assessment and decision-making in the humanitarian sector” (Darcy and Hofmann, 2003), identifies a critical gap in food security and needs assessment practice. While there is a broadly accepted definition of food security<sup>1</sup>, there is a lack of clarity and common definitions for classifying various situations in terms of varying severity and implications for action. This lack of clarity is operationally problematic because the way in which a situation is classified determines not only the form of response, but the source of funding and its scale, the planning timeframe and the organizational roles of different stakeholders. There is an urgent practical and operational need for a broadly accepted food security and humanitarian classification system.

This “gap” and resulting lack of clarity is well recognized by analysts, donors, governments, implementing agencies, academics and the media. Projects such as the EC/WFP Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (SENAC) project, the EC/FAO Project for Linking Information to Action, and the FAO/Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP) are all focused on improving food security assessment practices in order to elicit more effective response. NGO’s, including Save the Children, Oxfam, CARE, World Vision and others are also investing in improving assessment practices. Academic institutions such as Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Sussex, Tufts University, Tulane University, and ODI also guide and contribute to this dialogue.

There are a number of ongoing initiatives to improve and develop global food security classifications systems. Inter-agency and global initiatives include the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions SMART (SMART 2006), the DFID sponsored Benchmarking effort (DFID 2005), and the WHO led Humanitarian Tracking System. Coming to an agreement on a means of classifying humanitarian situations is also identified as a priority activity in the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee as part of the ongoing humanitarian reform efforts (OCHA 2006). In practice, the food security and humanitarian communities are working towards a consensus on classifying food security situations with increasing attention to humanitarian principles and accountability.

Lessons learned from the last decade of humanitarian crisis assessment and response experience highlight several key challenges that can help to inform the development of a global food security classification system. In summary, a classification system needs to enable:

- **Technical Consensus:** Humanitarian crises always involves multiple stakeholders, and their response is much more effective (whether for leveraging resources or coordination) if there is technical consensus on the situation analysis. Without common terminology and criteria, such consensus is very difficult to build, and can be undermined by non-technical agendas.
- **Comparability Over Space:** In order to ensure the best use of limited resources, decision makers need to know how the severity of crisis situations compares from one place to another. Only when such a comparison can be made using commonly adopted criteria can humanitarian assistance be best directed to the people most in need.
- **Comparability over Time:** Decision makers need to be able to understand the evolution of a crisis as it worsens or improves in order to increase, decrease, or change the strategic focus of the response as well as identify exit criteria.
- **Transparency through Evidence-Based Analysis:** Analysts should be fully transparent in how conclusions are made, and decision makers should demand evidence to support findings. Without reference criteria the requirements for an adequate evidence base remain ambiguous.
- **Accountability:** Without consensual standards in reference characteristics, “analytical” accountability is not possible. There is a strong need for reference characteristics to avoid errors of commission (i.e., exaggerating a crisis which can lead to over-response) or errors of omission (i.e., “missing” or understating a crisis which can lead to lack of response). The former can waste resources and undermine livelihoods, while the latter can lead to loss of human lives and chronic poverty. With reference criteria and evidence standards it is possible to enforce accountability from those responsible for analysis through peer review and public challenges to questionable findings.
- **Effective Early Warning:** Decision makers need to know the potential severity, likelihood and timing of a pending crisis. Without a common technical understanding for describing crises, early warning messages can be ambiguous and go unheeded.

- **More Strategic Response:** Depending on the specific severity level of a given food security or humanitarian situation, there is a need for fundamentally different emphases in strategic response. Furthermore, the menu of options for mitigating a crisis needs to be fully evaluated, rather than resorting to a ‘supply-side’ driven response.

## 2.2 Review of Existing Food Security Classifications Systems

Classification systems are not new, as means of classifying famines date back to the 1880’s Indian Famine Codes (Brennan 1984, Howe and Devereux 2004). In practice, classification of some type is necessary in order to make sense of situation analyses and communicate this to decision makers. Currently there are numerous ways in which food security and humanitarian situations are defined and classified. Agencies such as Oxfam, WFP, FAO GIEWS, MSF, FEWS NET, and many others have developed different systems for classifying food security crisis situations. Depending on the country, institutions involved, and persons doing the analysis, classification systems differ. Currently operational systems can be roughly divided into four broad types: “relative terms”, “guiding definitions”, “specific aspect” and “referenced threshold” classifications. A comprehensive review of the different systems is not presented here, but rather a brief review that identifies aspects of selected systems and illustrates their differences and weaknesses (see and Darcy and Hoffman 2003 for a comprehensive comparative review).

### *Classification Systems Based on “Specific Aspects”*

Specific aspect classification systems are designed to distinguish meaningful categories of specific variables such as malnutrition, conflict, and coping strategies. One example is the MSF nutrition guidelines (2000), where stages of food insecurity are referenced against stages of coping strategies including Insurance Strategies, Crisis Strategies, and Distress Strategies. Other examples of a specific classification system are the conflict typologies developed by Samarasinghe, et al. (1999) for USAID and the Swiss Peace FAST conflict early warning system developed by Krummenacher et al (2001).

These systems are effective to for providing a more detailed and nuanced understanding of a particular variable. Bringing these specific-aspect classification systems together in an integrated system reveals complex inter-relationships between variables and allows for a more comprehensive and robust analysis.

### *Classification Systems Based on ‘Relative Terms’*

The most often used classification system utilizes adjective variations on terms such as “vulnerable”, “food insecure”, “hotspot”, etc. to describe or classify different food insecurity situations. While striving to capture the overall essence of a crisis, this type of classification system is based on relative terms whose meaning is open to interpretation (even if the analysts themselves are clear about their meanings). This classification approach can have internal integrity when used within a particular country or context, enabling people or geographic areas to be identified and prioritized. Thus, they can be effective in drawing attention to priority areas within a given system, and imply a degree of severity.

These “relative terms” are generally not accompanied, however, by uniform reference characteristics -- thus opening their use to bias and leading to ambiguous or subjective categorization. As such, systems based on relative terms typically do not enable technical consensus and are not comparable over space and time. The ambiguity inherent in relative terms and the lack of clear reference characteristics often means that transparency and accountability are not achieved.

### *Classification Systems Based on ‘Guiding Definitions’*

Other classification systems utilize consistent “guiding definitions” to arrive at a classification. An example of guiding definitions are the current FEWS NET alert levels (FEWSNET, 2005), whereby geographic areas and countries are divided into levels of Emergency, Warning, Watch, Concern, or No Alert<sup>3</sup>. Associated with each of these terms is a definition that guides its consistent usage (Appendix E). Furthermore, the choice of classification terms is meant to evoke different actions, and the guiding definition has broad implications for decision making.

Another example of a system using guiding definitions is the Kenya Arid Lands Resource Management Project (AL-RMP), where stages of Normal, Alert, Alarm, and Emergency are associated with guiding definitions (Appendix E). Additional examples of systems using guiding definitions are Oxfam’s severity typology that uses Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3, which describes varying levels of food and nutrition crisis, and FAO’s Global Information Early Warning System (GIEWS) which categorizes countries based on shortfalls of food supply and access.

While intended to provide guidance on their usage, the “guiding definitions” are generally descriptive and open to interpretation, limiting the comparability over space and time. For example, some places may be classified as an “emergency” but are actually less severe than a different place being analyzed by different analysts, and vice-versa. The lack of clear reference characteristics associated with the guiding definitions limits the degree of comparability



of analysis over space and time and does not explicitly set targets for evidence-based analysis.

### *Classification Systems Based on ‘Referenced Thresholds’*

“Referenced Threshold” classification systems identify measurable indicators of food insecurity and set cut-off limits for determining various stages. Typically these “measurable” indicators are outcome oriented and based on anthropometry, including malnutrition and mortality. Examples of this approach are the Famine Magnitude Scale developed by Howe and Devereux (2004) and the Food Insecurity Classification developed by Darcy and Hoffman (2003).

The Famine Magnitude Scale of Howe and Devereux includes six levels of famine intensity including: Food Security Conditions, Food Insecurity Conditions, Food Crisis Conditions, Famine Conditions, Severe Famine Conditions, and Extreme Famine Conditions. Each level is referenced against specific malnutrition and mortality thresholds as well as general descriptors of livelihoods. This scale of intensity is further complimented with a magnitude scale that identifies various categories of magnitude according to mortality figures resulting from a crisis (Appendix F).

Darcy and Hoffman’s classification of food insecurity includes four levels: Chronic Food Insecurity, Acute Food Crisis, Long-term Food Crisis, and Famine. Each of these levels is associated with specific malnutrition and mortality rates, as well as general food security indicators. This classification also associates each level with general responses.

Both of these initiatives explicitly strive to make the classification comparable over space and time by referencing the classification to internationally accepted, quantifiable criteria. The IPC builds on this approach of linking categories to measurable indicators and integrates a more comprehensive set of outcomes on lives and livelihoods. It also links these to response, early warning, analysis procedures, mapping conventions and population table conventions.

## 3. OVERVIEW OF THE IPC AND ‘SITUATION ANALYSIS’

To address the key challenges noted previously the FSAU has developed the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification (IPC) which builds on the strengths of the main types of classification systems and makes some unique contributions.

The IPC enables a composite analytical statement on food security and humanitarian situations, drawing together multiple indicators of human welfare and livelihoods to guide consistent and meaningful analysis. Use of the IPC builds upon, but is a separate process from, specific methodologies used to collect and analyze specific data sets. In this way the IPC enables **meta-analysis** of existing data and information from a variety of sources to summarize **Situation Analysis**.

The IPC helps meet the goals of the Humanitarian Charter (Sphere 2004), as well as numerous international conventions asserting human rights such as the World Food Summit Plan of Action (FAO 1996). The IPC is designed around the broad conceptual frameworks for food security analysis including the four pillars of access, availability, utilization, and stability; the UNICEF model of nutrition analysis (UNICEF 1996); and Sen’s entitlement analysis (1981). Analytically, the IPC draws from a broad interpretation of a livelihoods approach (FSAU 2004) which includes both livelihood strategies, drawn from the Household Economy Approach (SCF-UK 2000), and livelihood assets, drawn from the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (Frankenburger 1992, DFID 2001).

### 3.1 Analytical Logic of the IPC

The IPC is a means for classifying various stages of food security and humanitarian situations based on outcomes on lives and livelihoods. Outcomes are a function of both immediate hazard events along with underlying causes, and the specific vulnerabilities of livelihood systems (including both livelihood assets and livelihood strategies). The outcomes are referenced against internationally accepted standards, and their convergence substantiates a phase classification for any given area. Each phase is associated with a unique strategic response framework, while the outcome configuration for any given situation guides the development of the most appropriate responses within that framework. While the phase classification describes the current or imminent situation for a given area, early warning levels are a predictive tool to communicate the risk of a worsening phase.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>The term ‘decision makers’ is broadly used to include donors, implementing agencies, government officials, the media, and any other stakeholder that utilizes humanitarian information to inform action. Decision makers are distinct from ‘analysts’, whose responsibility it is to provide relevant, reliable, and timely information.

<sup>2</sup>‘Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life’, World Food Summit Plan of Action, 1996.

<sup>3</sup>FEWS NET is currently developing a revised version of this alert system.

### 3.2 Components of the IPC

The IPC integrates a suite of tools including the **Reference Table, Analysis Templates, Cartographic Protocols, and Population Tables.**

The IPC **Reference Table** guides analysis for both the **Phase Classification** and **Early Warning Levels.** The Phase Classification classifies geographic areas and social groups into one of five **Phases**—*Generally Food Secure, Chronically Food Insecure, Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis, Humanitarian Emergency and Famine/Humanitarian Catastrophe.* A set of **Key Reference Outcomes** are associated with each Phase to guide the analytical statement. These are drawn from internationally accepted standards, and represent a breadth of outcomes on human welfare and livelihoods that enable triangulation and ensure adaptability of the IPC to a wide variety of situations.

To facilitate linking information to action, each Phase is associated with a Strategic Response Framework that provides strategic, yet generic guidance for achieving three objectives:

- (1) mitigate immediate negative outcomes
- (2) support livelihoods
- (3) address underlying/structural causes

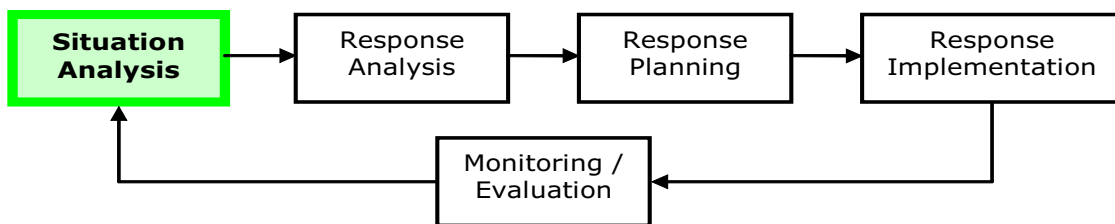
The Reference Table also includes protocols for **Early Warning**, which are divided into three levels: (1) *Alert*, (2) *Moderate Risk*, (3) *High Risk.* Each of these levels is associated with key information required for effective early warning: *Probability, Severity, Changes in Process Indicators, and Implications for Action* (expected duration of the Situation Analysis is included in the cartographic protocols).

The **Analysis Templates** are tables which organize key pieces of information in a transparent manner to substantiate a Phase Classification statement. They include additional important information to guide effective response. The **Cartographic Protocols** are a set of standardized mapping and visual communication conventions that effectively convey key information concerning situation analysis on a single map. The **Population Tables** are a means to consistently and effectively communicate population estimates by administrative boundaries, livelihood systems, and livelihood types.

### 3.3 Situation Analysis

The IPC enables consistent analysis and communication of Situation Analysis--a distinct yet often overlooked, or assumed, stage in the “analysis-response continuum”. The diagram below illustrates its relationship with other broad stages, which include: Response Analysis, Response Planning, Response Implementation and Monitoring/Evaluation.

**Figure 1: Situating ‘Situation Analysis’ within Broad Stages of the Analysis-Response Continuum**



The overall objectives of each stage are:

- **Situation Analysis:** To identify foundational aspects of a given situation (e.g., severity, magnitude, causes, and others) which are most relevant and essential for an effective and efficient response and for which there should be broad technical consensus.
- **Response Analysis:** To identify the range of potential strategic responses that would be most effective and efficient in mitigating immediate outcomes, supporting livelihoods, and addressing underlying causes.
- **Response Planning:** To identify and put in place operational requirements and systems to enable an effective and efficient response, including logistics, financing, institutional partnerships, advocacy, training and others.
- **Response Implementation:** To implement multiple operational modalities towards an effective and efficient response.
- **Monitoring / Evaluation:** To detect changes in Response Implementation and Situation Analysis; to determine

degrees of desired impact from project output and overall impact perspectives; and inform adjustments in the response as necessary.

Each of these stages involves unique expertise, institutions, timing and outputs. Therefore, they warrant distinct protocols specifically designed to facilitate that stage and ensure minimal standards of information provision, rigour and consistency.

The IPC provides key protocols for Situation Analysis and provides the platform for subsequent Response Analysis, Response Planning, Response Implementation, and Monitoring/Evaluation. Although these latter aspects of the analysis-response continuum are not covered in this manual, they too warrant formation of basic protocols and standards. The Needs Analysis Framework (NAF 2005) is an example of a global effort to provide protocols for multi-sectoral and inter-agency Response Analysis (IASC 2005).

Situation Analysis is the foundation for planning and implementing subsequent interventions. Optimally there should be broad consensus from all stakeholders (UN agencies, NGOs, governments, donors, media, and affected populations) on Situation Analysis. Strong consensus on Situation Analysis leads to effective coordination, more leverage for resources, and more efficient response.

**Key aspects of Situation Analysis include:**

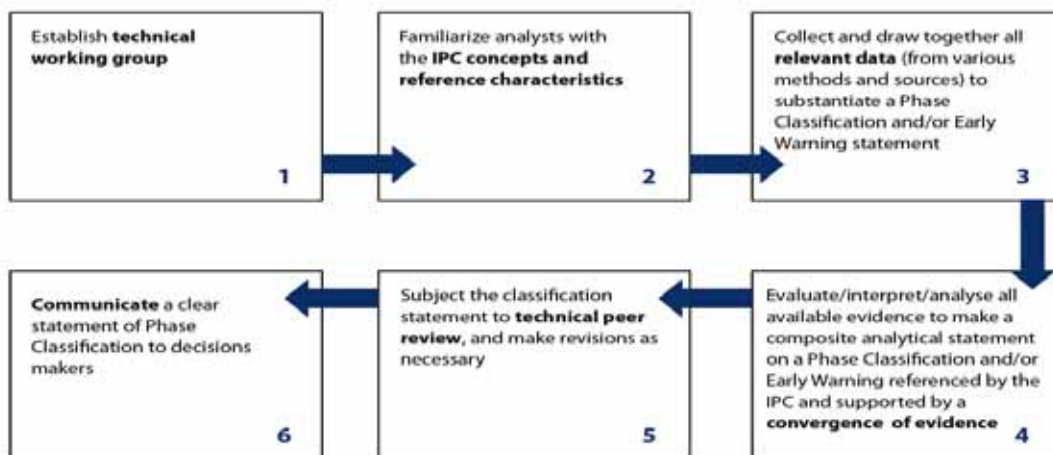
- **Severity of the situation-** How severe is the situation with regards to impacts on human lives and livelihoods?
- **Geographic extent-** What is the approximate geographic area in crisis? This should be defined according *to* actual spatial analysis, but can be guided by livelihood zones, administrative boundaries, agro-ecological zones, and other spatial markers.
- **Magnitude (# people)-** What is the estimated number of people experiencing various severity levels of crisis?
- **Immediate causes-** What are the direct, or proximate, causes of the crisis?
- **Underlying causes-** What are the underlying, distal, or structural causes of the crisis?
- **Identification of general needs-** What basic human needs and aspects of livelihood systems require support?
- **Distinction of transitory or chronic situations -** Is the underlying nature of an acute crisis generally food secure or chronically food insecure?
- **Criteria for social targeting-** What are the key criteria for targeting interventions to the most appropriate social groups?
- **Projected trend-** Is the future projected trend for the crisis area expected to improve, worsen or stay the same for the foreseeable future?
- **Confidence level of analysis-** What is the overall confidence level of the analysis as estimated by the analysts and based on a heuristic critique of the available evidence?

The IPC integrates all of these aspects of Situation Analysis in the Analysis Templates and communicates them with the Cartographic Protocols.

**3.4 Steps in Using the IPC and its Adaptability to Diverse Information Systems**

The general process of using the IPC involves six main steps (Figure 2). Adherence to these steps will enable evidence-based analysis, technical consensus, and linking information to action--all of which underpin the technical integrity of the IPC.

Figure 2: Steps to use the IPC



The IPC is designed to be adaptable to a wide variety of information systems and analytical approaches. In most countries that experience chronic food insecurity or recurrent humanitarian crises, an information system of some type typically exists. This may range from a very rigorous and comprehensive system to a minimal or informal system. The IPC is designed to build from existing information systems in any given country (much like an ‘add-on’ component), and help make the most rigorous, consistent, and meaningful use of that data and analysis. As such, the IPC can be equally applicable in ‘data rich’ and ‘data poor’ settings.

### 3.5 Unique Approaches of the IPC

The IPC incorporates many elements of the classification systems described previously, and makes new contributions including:

- Enabling the strategic goal of saving *livelihoods* through inclusion of the phase of Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis, and inclusion of livelihood assets in the Key Reference Outcomes and Strategic Response Framework and Analysis Templates.
- Integrating a number of different reference outcomes (in addition to nutrition indicators) to allow for greater adaptability to different situations, practicality given data limitations, and increased opportunities for triangulation.
- The explicit inclusion of additional key aspects of Situation Analysis such as causes, magnitude, projected trend, social group identification, underlying conditions, and confidence level of analysis.
- Putting in practice the concept of convergence of evidence to support a phase classification statement. This is practical due to the highly complex and dynamic nature of classifying food security and humanitarian situations as well as widely varying data availability.
- The inclusion of a comprehensive, yet generic and widely-applicable Strategic Response Framework associated with each phase.
- The inclusion of multi-sectoral aspects of humanitarian issues as both Key Reference Outcomes and in the Strategic Response Framework.
- Providing protocols for Early Warning and linking the various risk levels to the Phase classification system.
- Enabling increased rigour and transparency by supporting the classification with an evidence based approach using standardized Analysis Templates.
- The development of Cartographic Protocols to enable standardized and clear communication of complex analysis.
- The development of standard Population Tables that identify the number of people in crisis by administrative boundaries and livelihood systems.