

Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook

second edition



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World Food Programme
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

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Foreword

For decades, WFP has been on the frontline of the fight against hunger. But today, the global context in which WFP operates is rapidly changing. New challenges are emerging. High commodity prices, the increasing number of natural disasters, and the rapid urbanization of populations are leading to higher levels of food insecurity, but also to more complex and multi-faceted emergencies.

To address the changing nature of food insecurity and its nutritional outcomes, WFP has shifted from a food aid to a food assistance agency and developed a more diverse and innovative set of tools.

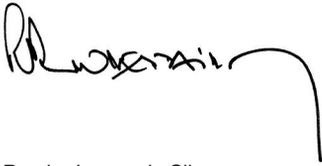
Food Security Assessments are one of the fundamental tools of the organization. They provide the analysis to make well informed decisions on the most appropriate type and scale of interventions. They determine who are the food insecure people, how many they are, where they live and why they are food insecure. They also make recommendations on what needs to be done to assist them.

WFP is committed to excellence in the field of food security analysis. In the last three years, through an ambitious project to strengthen WFP's needs assessment practice, needs assessments have become the backbone of WFP's operations. Every year WFP conducts more than 90 assessments in partnership with governments, United Nations Agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and donors. WFP's assessments inform not only WFP but also the wider humanitarian community.

This commitment to excellence is reflected in the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) Handbook. This second edition has benefited from all the latest methodological advances made by WFP under the guidance of leading food security experts from academia, NGOs and United Nations organizations, and building on decades of field practice and lessons learned from major assessments ranging from the yearly in-depth assessments in Darfur to the rapid assessments conducted after the floods in West Africa in 2007. It has been made possible thanks to the generous support from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO).

This edition contains information on the latest progress made to understand how markets impact on household food security, to identify chronic and transitory food insecurity, and measure food insecurity. It integrates food security and nutrition analysis and explores the population's vulnerability and risks to livelihoods. It also facilitates the analysis of response options, looking at food and non-food options.

The EFSA Handbook provides WFP staff and partners with the most up-to-date and advanced guidance on how to conduct accurate, timely and transparent food security assessments. This will enable us to address the new hunger challenges of this century.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ramiro Lopes da Silva', with a long, sweeping underline that curves downwards to the right.

Ramiro Lopes da Silva
Deputy Chief Operating Officer and Director of Operations

Acknowledgements

The Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) Handbook was made possible thanks to the generous support of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO). The German Government supported a preparatory technical meeting.

The Handbook was written under the umbrella of the Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Implementation Plan (SENAIP). The purpose of the Plan (2004-2007) was to reinforce WFP's capacity to assess humanitarian needs in the food sector during emergencies and their aftermath through accurate and impartial needs assessments. The Plan and complementary projects were funded from internal and external sources, including ECHO, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Citigroup Foundation, the Department for International Development, United Kingdom (DFID), the French, Danish, and German Governments.

This Handbook benefited from several peer review and consultation mechanisms. Valuable comments and feedback were received from WFP staff members and partners consulted through an email-based discussion involving more than 150 people including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Vision International, *Action contre la Faim (ACF)*, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Système d'Information sur les Marchés Agricoles (SIMA)* Niger, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Niger, *Direction Régionale de Développement Agricole (DRDA)* Niger, *Service des statistiques de l'élevage (SIM BETAILE)* Niger, CARE Niger, *Comité Permanent inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS)*, *Médecins d'Afrique*, Agro-Action Allemande (AAA) DRC, *El Centro Latinoamericano de Medicina de desastres (CLAMED)*, *Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba (ONE)*, *Instituto de Investigaciones de Riego y Drenaje, (IIRD)* Cuba, *Instituto de Planificación Física (IPF)* Cuba, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and HelpAge International.

The SENAC¹ Advisory group of experts was also invited to be part of a working group established for the preparation of the Handbook. Valuable advice was received from the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex), the Michigan State University, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Tulane University, the European Commission Joint Research Centre, and the Feinstein International Centre (Tufts University).

The working group also included a number of WFP staff members, including the Regional Assessment Officers, VAM (vulnerability analysis and mapping) and programme staff from several regional bureaux and country offices, and staff from Headquarters – especially the Food Security Analysis Service, the Policy, Planning and Strategy Division and Service, and the Programme Design and Support Division.

WFP also thanks the VAM officers and Regional Assessment Officers who provided additional inputs and contributed to the consolidation of the Handbook after a final workshop in April 2008.

WFP expresses special thanks to Agnès Dhur and Jeremy Loveless for their substantial contribution to the development of the Handbook and to the consulting group, Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), for consolidating the final draft.

All these contributions are gratefully acknowledged although responsibility for the present text, including errors, remains with WFP.

1. Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessments Capacity (SENAC), which is the main component of SENAIIP.



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Acronyms

ACF	<i>Action contre la Faim</i> (Action Against Hunger)
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
BMI	body mass index
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CDC	United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CFSAM	crop and food security assessment mission
CFSVA	comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis
CFW	cash for work
CFDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMR	child mortality rate
CSI	coping strategy index
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department
EFSA	emergency food security assessment
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCS	food consumption score
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FFR	food for recovery
FFW	food for work
GAM	global acute malnutrition
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
H/A	height-for-age
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HH	household
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
IASC	Inter Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person

IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IRA	Immediate Response Account
JAM	joint assessment mission
MUAC	mid-upper arm circumference
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (United Kingdom)
PCNA	post-conflict needs assessment
PDA	personal digital assistant
PPS	probability proportional to size
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
QMC	quality monitoring checklist
SENAC	Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity
SENAIP	Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Implementation Plan
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis
U5MR	under-5 mortality rate
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping
W/A	weight-for-age
WFP	World Food Programme
W/H	weight-for-height
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

This Handbook is intended for use in emergency situations or protracted crises, whether due to sudden natural disaster, drought, disease, economic collapse or conflict, and to address the needs of both resident and displaced persons.

The Handbook is intended for WFP VAM and food security analysts but it will also be useful for programme staff as well as for the governmental, NGO and United Nations partners with whom WFP collaborates in emergency food security assessments (EFSA).

Background

Since 2003, through the support of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), WFP has made particular efforts to improve its capacity for EFSA. In the first edition of the EFSA Handbook, WFP sought to catalogue the different types of assessment approaches and methodologies undertaken in emergencies and provide normative guidance to staff on conducting food security assessments in the field.

This second edition is a continuation of a process through which WFP intends to improve its capacity to accurately identify and measure food insecurity, as well as formulate appropriate responses. The second edition of the EFSA Handbook moves beyond describing the various approaches to measuring food insecurity among households and populations affected by natural and man-made emergencies. It complements the first edition by providing guidance for collecting and analysing both rapid and in-depth emergency assessment data and for formulating recommendations for effective programming response.

This second edition represents WFP's corporate approach to assessing food insecurity at the household and community levels and should be used as a companion to the first edition of the EFSA Handbook. It will be useful to both WFP and partner staff who have a firm grasp of the concepts introduced in the first edition and their practical application. Given the five years and continued technical

development that has occurred between the two editions, some terms and tools have been refined. In cases where differences exist, the most recent guidance should be employed.

Complementary guidelines

The EFSA Handbook (second edition) is complemented by the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) Guidelines. A CFSVA provides an in-depth picture of the food security situation and the vulnerability of households in a given country during “normal times” and serves as such as the foundation for WFP programming at the country level. The Conceptual Food and Nutrition Security Framework for EFSA and CFSVA is identical and the analytical approach for the different types of EFSA and the CFSVA is consistent: effort has been made to harmonize sampling approaches, define indicators and follow a similar logic of analysis. An in-depth EFSA uses a very similar approach to the CFSVA to analyse food security in a crisis situation. The CFSVA guidelines will therefore assist with the conduct of in-depth EFSA. Moreover, any type of EFSA can draw on the data of the information base of a previously conducted CFSVA in the same country through understanding the deeper causes of chronic food insecurity and vulnerability and comparing the standardized crisis indicators with pre-crisis levels.

The upcoming UNHCR / WFP Joint Assessment Missions (JAM) guidelines, which guide the assessment of the situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons are consistent with the new EFSA guidance. Specific guidelines exist for joint FAO / WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Missions (CFSAMs) and these are also consistent with the EFSA Handbook.

Structure of the Handbook

The Handbook comprises five parts.

Part I presents the purpose and objectives of an EFSA, the Conceptual Framework, key food security concepts and the different types of EFSA.

Part II focuses on information requirements and indicators. More precisely it covers the analysis plan, explaining its purpose and components; the information needs; the requirements for the contextual information; the indicators and data necessary to estimate food insecurity and consequences to lives and livelihoods; and what sources of data to use.

Part III focuses on planning an assessment and collecting primary data. It presents the planning steps to undertake prior to fieldwork, logistics considerations for

fieldwork, and approaches and tools for primary data collection, with particular emphasis on the importance of good-quality primary data.

Part IV explains how to conduct a situation analysis, forecast and response analysis and then how to formulate recommendations for interventions.

Part V outlines the EFSA report structure, explains the EFSA quality monitoring system that builds on the EFSA; and provides guidelines for communicating EFSA conclusions and recommendations to decision-makers.

The Annexes provide supplementary tools such as standard questionnaires, templates and additional guidance and reference documents for food security analysis and response.

It should be noted that in January 2008 WFP's Emergency Needs Assessment Service (ODAN) and the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Branch (VAM) were merged into the Food Security Analysis Service (OMXF). The acronym VAM is still commonly used to refer to this service.

Part I

Conceptual Framework, objectives and types of EFSAs



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The purpose of an emergency food security assessment (EFSA) is to assess the impact of shock on the food security of households and communities within the affected area. An emergency is a situation that causes widespread human, material, economic or environmental damage, threatening human lives and livelihoods and exceeding the coping capacities of the affected communities and/or government.²

An EFSA combines primary and secondary information to inform the decision-making process during rapid- and slow-onset emergencies. This Handbook provides guidance on analysing the food security and nutrition situation within a framework, and examines the linkages between them. Key outputs of an EFSA include:

- description of the current food and nutrition security situation;
- analysis of the ways in which the affected population, the government and other stakeholders are responding to the emergency;
- forecast of the future evolution of food and nutrition security;
- identification of response options, and recommendations for intervention or non-intervention.

An EFSA may be conducted as a rapid assessment or an in-depth assessment. A sequential EFSA is a series of rapid assessments, or a rapid assessment followed by in-depth assessments.

Part I of this Handbook provides an overview of the objectives and conceptual basis of an EFSA. It covers:

- the objectives of an EFSA and the questions that an EFSA should answer;
- the concepts that underlie EFSA analysis, and the ways in which these are combined within the Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework.

Each section of the Handbook includes references to detailed coverage provided in other sections and other documents, including Technical Guidance Sheets.

2. The WFP corporate definition of emergencies, adopted in February 2005, is as follows: "For purposes of WFP emergency projects, emergencies are defined as urgent situations in which there is clear evidence that an event or series of events has occurred which causes human suffering or imminently threatens human lives or livelihoods, and which the government concerned has not the means to remedy; and it is a demonstrably abnormal event or series of events which produces dislocation in the life of a community on an exceptional scale." WFP/EB.1/2005/4-A

Key questions that an EFSA should answer

Although EFSA's differ according to the context and nature of the emergency concerned, each should answer a series of core questions. These focus on measuring the impact of a shock in terms of the potential change in food security status among affected households.

Does the shock have an impact on food security?

- How does the crisis situation compare with pre-crisis?
Is the population food-insecure?

Has the level of malnutrition among the affected population been exacerbated by the shock?³

- Is the population likely to remain or become food-insecure or malnourished in the future?

How severe is the problem?

- How severe is food insecurity and/or malnutrition?

How do people cope?

- Are the affected people able to cope with the problems on their own, without becoming more food-insecure and malnourished?

Who? How many? Where?

- Which population groups are food-insecure and/or malnourished now? Which groups may become so in the future?
- How many people are affected now? How many may be affected in the future?
- Where are these people located?

3. In most EFSA's, the primary concern is undernutrition, i.e. the form of malnutrition associated with poor growth, loss of weight and/or vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Overnutrition is another form of malnutrition, which is increasing in many contexts and can also affect food security, but it is rarely a primary concern in an emergency.

Why?

- What are the causes of present and future food insecurity and malnutrition?

What is needed?

- Can the affected people cope with and recover unaided? Are they already receiving assistance?
- Is additional assistance needed? If so, what type? For whom? When? Where? How much? For how long?
- Can the government and national organizations provide this assistance or is international assistance required?
- What is the most appropriate response?

Within this outline, a more detailed set of questions is developed for each assessment (see **Part III, Chapter 4**), according to the nature of the emergency, the type of EFSA and the time and resources available.

Conceptual framework of an EFSA

An EFSA may be undertaken in response to a rapid- or a slow-onset emergency. In either case, **food and nutrition security** is analysed to determine the nature of the risks faced by individuals and households.

This section explains three core concepts – livelihoods, food security and nutrition – and examines these within the Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework presented in **Section 3.4**.

3.1 Livelihoods⁴

3.1.1 Livelihood components

Livelihoods are defined in the Sphere Standards as: “Livelihoods comprise the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living linked to survival and future well-being.” See: “Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response”, The Sphere Project, Geneva, 2004.

An EFSA examines the **livelihoods** of households and individuals, and the ways in which these withstand problems or shocks. Analysis of livelihood security begins with examination of household **assets** and **livelihood strategies**.

Box 1.1: Assets and strategies

An **asset** can be defined as “anything that is considered valuable or useful, such as a skill, a quality, a person, etc.”⁵ In the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, assets are defined under six categories:

- human: health and nutrition status, physical capacity, skills, level of education, etc.;
- social: household, gender, kinship and other networks, community groups, values and attitudes, etc.;
- financial: income, credit and loans, savings, liquid assets, etc.;

4. The description of livelihoods presented in this section is based on the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). See: www.livelihoods.org/info/info_guidancesheets.html for more details.

5. Chambers Compact Dictionary, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, Edinburgh, UK, 2005.

- physical: productive assets such as tools and equipment, stores, housing, livestock, infrastructure, etc.;
- natural: land, water, forests, etc.;
- political: power relationships, access to – and influence over – local and higher-level government processes.

Strategies are the ways in which households utilize and combine their assets to obtain food, income and other goods and services, in the context in which they live. This is explained in the Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets as: “People’s choice of livelihood strategies, as well as the degree of influence they have over policy, institutions and processes, depends partly upon the nature and mix of the assets they have available to them. Some combination of them is required by people to achieve positive livelihood outcomes – that is, to improve their quality of life significantly on a sustainable basis.”

Example 1.1 gives a simplified illustration of how assets might be utilized within a household livelihood strategy.

Example 1.1: Assets and strategies

A household has the following **asset profile**:

- human: healthy and able-bodied men and women of working age; good knowledge of agriculture.
- social: well connected within the community.
- financial: low cash reserves.
- physical: few productive assets.
- natural: no land.
- political: no local representatives at the national level.

Assets are used to form a **livelihood strategy**:

- The household might use its strong **social** assets to obtain loans with which to rent land and buy tools and agricultural inputs. This enables it to utilize its human assets to cultivate and compensate for the low levels of financial and natural assets.

The assets to which a household has access and the strategies that it can employ are affected by the **context**, as follows:

- **Policies** may affect access to natural assets, through laws governing land tenure and property rights; the use of economic and physical assets, through trade policy; and the development of human assets, through payment for education and health services.
- **Institutions** include formal services, such as health, education and agricultural extension, and informal or customary institutions, such as those governing participation in the workforce for both men and women, the natural resource management of forests, pastureland and water, and conflict resolution.
- **Processes** are the ways in which actions take place and change occurs. They are affected by power relations and, in turn, affect the range of strategies available to a household. For example, access to influential people enhances livelihood strategies; informal relationships, such as traditions of trust and reciprocal support, are crucial to them.

Note: There are overlaps between some types of *assets* and *contexts*. For example, reciprocal support relationships could be categorized as “social assets” or “processes”. In such cases, categorization is less important than *understanding* and *including* the issue in the analysis.

3.1.2 Resilience, vulnerability and coping

When a shock occurs, households and individuals within a community react in different ways. The extent to which they can withstand shocks without excessive disruption of their livelihoods depends on their *resilience* or *vulnerability*. **Vulnerability** is defined as exposure to risk and the lack of ability to cope with its consequences. **Resilience** refers to a person’s or a community’s “ability to bounce back or recover after adversity or hard times, and to be capable of building positively on these adversities”.⁶

A household or individual with low resilience is considered to be vulnerable (see **Part IV, Chapter 2**). Resilience and vulnerability are determined by:

- the type of **shocks** that people are exposed to, for example, disease, economic problems such as unemployment, adverse climate, or conflict;
- the degree to which households and individuals can recover from shocks without compromising their long-term livelihood security.

When shocks push households beyond the difficulties faced in normal times, households and individuals employ **coping strategies**. Some of these may damage lives and livelihoods, thereby reducing resilience and increasing vulnerability.

In general, the more assets a household has and the more varied the strategies available to it, the more resilient that household will be. However, households with many physical, financial or natural assets may be targeted during conflict or civil unrest. In these cases, a strong asset profile increases vulnerability.

3.2 Food security

At the World Food Summit in 1996, **food security** was defined as: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs, and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

In an EFSA, the analysis of food security is based on three pillars: (i) **food availability**; (ii) **food access**; (iii) and **food utilization**. Indicators for analysis of the three pillars are provided in Part II.

6. Mission Australia Research and Social Policy, 2005.

3.2.1 Food availability

Food availability is the **physical presence of food** in the area of concern through all forms of domestic production, commercial imports and food aid. Food availability might be aggregated at the regional, national, district or community level. In an EFSA, food availability is usually analysed at the district and community levels; national and regional food availability may be considered when developing future scenarios and discussing response options. Food availability is determined by:

- *production*: food produced in the area;
- *trade*: food brought into the area through market mechanisms;
- *stocks*: food held by traders and in government reserves;
- *transfers*: food supplied by the government and/or aid agencies.

3.2.2 Food access

Food access concerns a **household's** ability to **acquire** adequate amounts of food, through one or a combination of own home production and stocks, purchases, barter, gifts, borrowing and food aid. The following are some examples:

- own production – crops, livestock, etc.;
- hunting, fishing and gathering of wild foods;
- purchase at markets, shops, etc.;
- barter – exchange of items for food;
- gifts from friends/relatives, community, government, aid agencies, etc.

Food may be *available* but not *accessible* to certain households if they cannot acquire a sufficient quantity or diversity of food through these mechanisms.

3.2.3 Food utilization

Food utilization refers to **households'** use of the food to which they have access, and **individuals'** ability to absorb and metabolize the nutrients – the conversion efficiency of the body. Food utilization includes:

- the ways in which food is stored, processed and prepared, including the water and cooking fuel used, and hygiene conditions;
- feeding practices, particularly for individuals with special nutrition needs, such as babies, young children, the elderly, sick people, and pregnant or lactating women;
- the sharing of food within the household, and the extent to which this corresponds to individuals' nutrition needs - growth, pregnancy, lactation, etc.;
- the health status of each member of the household.

Food may be *available* and *accessible* but certain household members may not benefit fully if they do not receive an adequate share of the food in terms of quantity and diversity, or if their bodies are unable to absorb food because of poor food preparation or sickness.

3.3 Nutrition security

Assessing the nutrition situation is an integral part of an EFSA.⁷ In addition to identifying the obvious health risks and problems affecting malnourished people, information on nutrition status provides objective and comparable indications of the extent of risks to lives and livelihoods. In particular:

- **acute malnutrition** is a clear sign that lives are in danger;
- **chronic malnutrition** indicates that there are long-standing problems in terms of food, health or care, generally related to poor livelihoods or deterioration of livelihoods.

The causes of malnutrition are summarized in the Sphere Standards as: “Food insecurity is one of three underlying causes of malnutrition [the others being health and care practices], and therefore wherever there is food insecurity there is a risk of malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies. Consideration of the impact of food insecurity on the nutrition situation is an essential part of food security assessment. However, it should not be assumed that food insecurity is the sole cause of malnutrition, without considering possible health and care causal factors.”

3.3.1 Food security

Food security is defined in **Section 3.2**.

3.3.2 Health status and the public health environment

In relation to nutrition status outcomes:

- the **health status** refers to the body’s ability to absorb and use the nutrients that are consumed; sickness, such as diarrhoea, can cause food to pass through the body without being absorbed;
- the **public health environment** refers to the conditions in which people live and the conduciveness or otherwise of these conditions to human health; water, sanitation, waste disposal systems and type of housing are key determinants of the public health environment.

3.3.3 Care practices

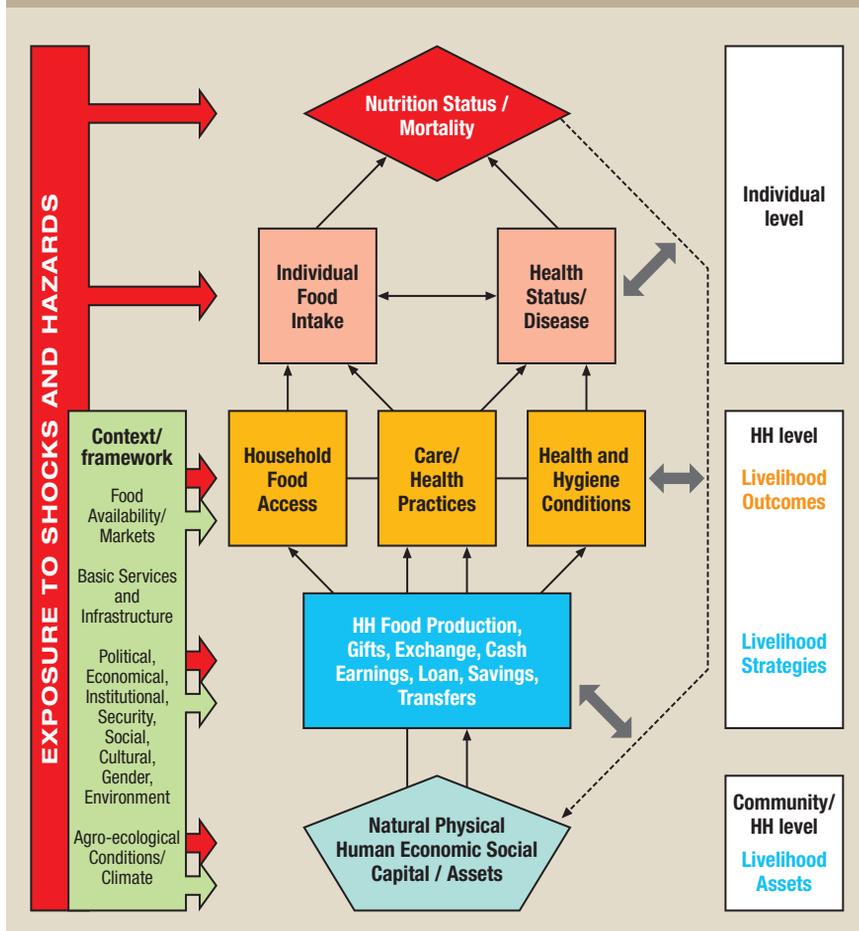
These are the ways in which dependent members of a household are looked after and fed. Among other factors, they include feeding practices for babies and young children, particularly breastfeeding and complementary feeding; food distribution priorities within the household, for example, children or adults first; and practices for the care of sick children and adults and the elderly. If care practices are inadequate, individual malnutrition can exist in households with good food access and a healthy environment.

7. This does not necessarily mean that an EFSA must always carry out direct measurement of the nutrition status, such as through collecting anthropometric data.

3.4 The Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework

The EFSA analysis is based on an understanding of food security and vulnerability. The Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework informs not only the selection of indicators for analysis and use in geographical targeting, but also the design of field assessment instruments and the organization of standardized reporting formats. The household food security conceptual framework adopted by EFSA considers food availability, food access and food utilization as core determinants of food security, and links these to households' asset endowments, livelihood strategies, and political, social, institutional and economic environment.

Figure 1.1: The Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework



During an EFSA, the conceptual framework serves two purposes by providing:

- a basis for developing initial hypotheses on the emergency, its causes and effects;
- a way of visualizing the relationships among factors that affect food and nutrition security, which is helpful during data collection and analysis.

The food security status of any household or individual is typically determined by the interaction of a broad range of agro-environmental, socio-economic and biological factors. As with the concepts of health or social welfare, there is no single, direct measure of food security. However, the complexity of the food security problem can be simplified by focusing on three distinct but interrelated dimensions: aggregate food availability, household food access, and individual food utilization.

Vulnerability is a forward-looking concept for assessing community and household exposure and sensitivity to future shocks. Ultimately, the vulnerability of a household or community depends on its ability to cope with exposure to the risks associated with shocks such as drought, flood, crop blight or infestation, economic fluctuation and conflict. The ability to manage these risks is determined largely by the characteristics of a household or community, particularly its asset base and the livelihood and food security strategies it pursues.

The framework shows that exposure to risk is determined by the frequency and severity of natural and human-induced hazards, and by their socio-economic and geographical scope. The determinants of coping capacity include the levels of a household's natural, physical, economic, human, social and political assets, the levels of its production, income and consumption, and its ability to diversify its income sources and consumption to mitigate the effects of the risks it may face at any moment.

Coping behaviour often involves activities such as the sale of land or other productive assets, the cutting of trees for sale as fuelwood or, in extreme cases, the sale of girls into prostitution. These practices can undermine not only the long-term productive potential of vulnerable households, but also important social institutions and relationships. The extent of reliance on destructive practices is an indicator of vulnerability levels during a crisis.

An understanding of *how* households cope is an important aspect of analysis, but an understanding of *how well* they cope, or of their resilience, is even more important. How well the local economy can absorb the additional labour or products – such as livestock or fuelwood – that come on the market as the result of coping behaviour during a disaster, and the stability of wages and prices for these products are critical factors in understanding vulnerability.

Food security analysis is a static view of food access and household constraints

to food access, from either a short- or a long-term perspective. In contrast, vulnerability analysis views food access from a more dynamic, forward-looking perspective, because it includes the element of risk that households face in their day-to-day decision-making, and their capacity to respond effectively over time.

There is a significant overlap between households that are currently food-insecure and those who are at risk to the severe fluctuations in food access that threaten human well-being. Although all households may be considered vulnerable, from an operational perspective the primary emphasis of vulnerability analysis should always be on those households that are nearly or already food-insecure.

Early identification of problems clearly reduces the likelihood of malnutrition and excess mortality. Prompt action at the lower levels of the Conceptual Framework is therefore highly desirable. An EFSA should be undertaken as soon as potential problems are identified (see **Part III, Section 2.1**).

Two simplified ways in which the Conceptual Framework can guide EFSA analysis are given in Example 1.2.

Example 1.2: The EFSA analytical approach

1. Poor **financial assets** lead a household to adopt damaging **livelihood strategies**, whereby all employable household members seek paid work. The mother is forced to leave her baby with the older children, who feed the baby irregularly using powdered milk mixed with contaminated water. These poor **care practices** create **food utilization** problems for the baby, who cannot absorb nutrients properly, even when the mother is present. The baby's condition worsens.
2. Weak health service **institutions** mean that when people become sick they are unable to get help. Poor **health** means that **human assets** deteriorate. Household productivity declines, with consequent reductions in **economic assets** and **food access**. Reduced food quantity and diversity exacerbate **health** and **nutrition** problems.

These examples demonstrate some of the ways in which problems in one component - livelihoods, food security or nutrition - can lead to problems in another. In other words, there are causal linkages among the factors. Causal linkages can also be two-way, as shown in Example 1.3.

Example 1.3: Two-way causal linkages

Food insecurity can cause malnutrition. For example:

- poor access to food may lead to inadequate dietary diversity and insufficient consumption of micronutrients;
- the use of dirty water in cooking may cause diarrhoea, and hence poor absorption of nutrients.

(cont...)

(...cont)

Malnutrition can cause food insecurity. For example:

- malnourishment diminishes a child's learning capacity, which may limit his/her ability to find well-paid work in the future;
- malnourishment in adults can lead to poor productive capacity and frequent sickness; these have severe economic effects on the household, leading to poor food access.

3.5 Local adaptation of the Conceptual Framework

All EFSAAs should draw on the Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework to answer each of the core questions identified in **Section 2**, but the relative significance of each element of the Framework depends on the region and the country, the nature of the crisis, and the groups that are affected. The Framework and questions must therefore be **adapted** to reflect the context of each EFSA. This is done **in the country**, based on consultations with as wide a spectrum of stakeholders as possible.

The Conceptual Framework *is adapted, prior to primary data collection in the field*, by carrying out the following steps:

- review of secondary information and discussion with key informants (see **Part III, Section 2.5**);
- identification of the factors most likely to affect food security and nutrition within the current context;
- identification of possible linkages among the factors affecting food security and nutrition.

Adapting the Conceptual Framework to the local context allows the formulation of **initial hypotheses** regarding the probable effects of the crisis and the issues to examine in the food and nutrition security assessment. These hypotheses also provide a basis for defining the **information requirements** (see **Part II**), inform the selection of assessment methodology (see **Part III**), and enable development of a preliminary analysis plan (see **Part III, Section 2.4**). Initial hypotheses may be *confirmed, refuted or adapted* during the course of the assessment.

The objectives define the outputs the EFSA is expected to generate. General objectives are similar for all EFSA, and encompass the core questions outlined in **Chapter 2**. As with the Conceptual Framework, however, these essentially standard objectives can be adapted to local circumstances. Context-specific details that may be added include the names of affected areas and an indication of priority population groups. It may also be necessary to insert additional objectives, depending on the context.

Objectives should be:

- as **specific** as possible: expectations should be clear;
- **realistic**: expectations should be feasible given the available time and resources, and the existing constraints.

Example 1.4 provides a set of general objectives that can be applied to most EFSA.

Example 1.4: EFSA objectives

- Identify the prevalence and severity of food insecurity and malnutrition in the area.
- Estimate how many people are affected.
- Determine where the affected people are located.
- Describe the coping strategies utilized by the various population groups, and identify any that may have a negative impact on lives or livelihoods.
- Describe the food-insecure and/or malnourished population in terms of their individual and socio-economic characteristics – gender, ethnicity, etc. - and livelihoods.
- Establish the reasons why people are food-insecure and/or malnourished by identifying factors that are associated with food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Determine whether food insecurity and nutrition problems are chronic or transitory.
- Develop scenarios for the next three, six and twelve months, and use these to forecast the evolution of the food security and nutrition situation *if no intervention is made*. Consider:
 - the severity of current food insecurity and malnutrition;
 - factors associated with food insecurity and malnutrition;
 - chronic and transitory issues;
 - the likelihood of future shocks;
 - the resilience and vulnerability of individuals and households to future shocks.

(cont...)

(...cont)

- Evaluate the need or otherwise for external assistance - food or non-food. Consider:
 - ongoing and planned interventions by government or other agencies;
 - the role of food aid and whether or not it is appropriate in this situation;
 - the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of various response options.
- Make recommendations for interventions, including: What? How much? For whom? When? For how long?

More details on the definition of objectives are given in **Part III, Section 2.2**.

Types of EFSA and partnerships

There are numerous ways of conducting an EFSA. The most appropriate approach depends on the objectives of the EFSA; the type of emergency; the stage in the emergency – early, late, etc.; the time available; access to the affected area; logistics; security; resources, especially human; and many other factors. The following sections present three types of EFSA. **In real situations, distinctions may not be as clear** as these categories imply, and it is not always possible to assign an EFSA precisely to one of the three types.

5.1 Types of EFSA

The three types of EFSA can be broadly summarized as:

- initial assessment;
- rapid assessment;
- in-depth assessment.

The analytical basis is the same for each type of EFSA. The essential differences lie in the time available for the assessment and the constraints to access to the areas concerned. These factors affect the scope of information that can be collected and the depth of the analysis.

In general, the three EFSA types can be categorized as follows:

- An initial assessment provides rough information quickly.
- A rapid assessment provides information that is collected and analysed using rigorous procedures, but time and access constraints lead to substantial reliance on assumptions, estimates and approximations.
- An in-depth assessment is based on a rigorous methodology, and collects a more substantial body of quantified information. The approach is time-consuming and generally inappropriate for sudden-onset crises.

Characteristics of each type of EFSA are summarized in the following sections.

5.1.1 Initial assessment⁸

An initial assessment is undertaken promptly following: (i) a sudden crisis; (ii) reports of deterioration in a long-term crisis; or (iii) improved physical access to an area experiencing an ongoing crisis.

The primary purpose of an initial assessment is to provide critical information for the formulation of emergency assistance plans, funding appeals and the design of more detailed follow-up assessments. Typically, all aspects of an initial assessment – from fieldwork in affected areas to production of the final report – should be completed within six to ten days. Decisions regarding where to carry out an initial assessment and which agencies to involve will usually be taken at the country level, through discussion between the United Nations country team (UNCT), led by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) or the United Nations Resident Representative, and the government concerned. Initial assessments are usually based on secondary data and key informant interviews, but some quick field visits may be undertaken.

The initial assessment addresses the following priority questions:

- Is there a food security and/or nutrition problem that poses an immediate threat to life? If so, what types of intervention should be launched immediately?
- Is there need for a more thorough – rapid – assessment? If so, when should this take place and what should its focus be?

5.1.2 Rapid assessment

A rapid assessment is undertaken following an initial assessment in a sudden crisis, or as a component of a reassessment. It provides more details than the initial assessment, and is based on a combination of secondary and primary data. Formal surveys and interviews may be used. Both quantitative and qualitative data may be collected. The rapid assessment typically provides information on:

- the nature and scale of the crisis: effects on food security, nutrition, and livelihoods;
- the affected population: estimated numbers and locations;
- access constraints: logistics, security, etc.;
- recommendations for immediate, short-term and, possibly, longer-term interventions.

A rapid assessment often takes place in a fast-changing context where results are needed quickly for decision-making, hence the need to compromise between information accuracy and timeliness.

5.1.3 In-depth assessment

An in-depth assessment is undertaken when more time, access and resources are available. It provides detailed and often statistically representative information that

8. For more information, see: Technical Guidance Sheet No. 6, Initial Emergency Food Security Assessments, WFP Emergency Needs Assessment Service, September 2007.

can be extrapolated to wider population groups and areas. An in-depth assessment may be carried out when:

- the situation seems to be deteriorating slowly, and detailed information is required to inform programming decisions;
- an emergency has stabilized, and detailed analysis is necessary and feasible;
- baseline information needs to be created or updated for monitoring purposes.

In-depth assessments use rigorous methodologies that are adapted to the context and that include random-sampled, large-scale household food security and nutrition surveys (see **Part III**) and household economy baseline surveys⁹.

5.2 Partnerships and inter-agency assessments

5.2.1 Partnerships

As far as possible, assessments should be planned and implemented through partnerships involving multiple stakeholders; for example, WFP working with the national government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and other agencies. Partnerships have the following **advantages**:

- The involvement of numerous stakeholders helps to ensure that many perspectives are taken into account.
- Collaboration in defining assessment objectives and analysing information ensures comprehensive ownership of the assessment conclusions and recommendations.
- The incorporation of different agencies can broaden the skills available to the assessment team.
- Transparency of the process enhances the acceptability of the conclusions. For example, when affected communities are included, they are more likely to understand the basis for recommendations.
- Assessment fatigue among affected communities is reduced, because they are subjected to questioning by one assessment team instead of several separate teams.

Potential **disadvantages** of partnerships include the following:

- It may take a long time to coordinate stakeholders, which is problematic in initial and rapid assessments.
- The incorporation of too many perspectives may compromise the methodology; if too many issues are included, the assessment may lose focus.

9. For more information, see: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis Guidelines, WFP, January 2009; and Technical Guidance Sheet No. 12, Complementary Methods and Tools for Emergency Food Security Assessment, WFP Emergency Needs Assessment Service, December 2007.

- Particularly in conflicts, the inclusion of certain partners may compromise the neutrality of the assessment team and affect informants' willingness to talk openly.

In most situations, however, the benefits of partnerships outweigh the drawbacks.

When a variety of partner agencies are to be included in the **field assessment team**, two points should be borne in mind:

1. Ensure that each member of the team has something to contribute to primary data collection. The inclusion of individuals for purely political reasons is counter-productive.
2. Do not make the team too large. An overlarge team can be difficult to manage and may pose a security problem and affect relationships with communities and the quality of the information collected. The arrival of a fleet of vehicles in a small village can accentuate the differences between the community and the team, making it impossible to develop dialogue.

5.2.2 Inter-agency assessments

Partnerships often take the form of inter-agency assessments, and are organized according to the context and objectives of the assessment. In general, all the key agencies should be involved in planning the assessment, and a range of agency representatives with complementary skills should be included in the assessment team.

WFP regularly participates in several inter-agency assessments in numerous countries. Some of these are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Inter-agency assessments		
Assessment	Main partners	Context
Joint assessment mission (JAM)	WFP – UNHCR	Refugee and IDP situations
Crop and food security assessment mission (CFSAM)	WFP – FAO	Agricultural areas affected by crisis
United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC)	WFP – governments – other United Nations agencies – NGOs	Large-scale natural disasters
Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)	WFP – OCHA – governments – other United Nations agencies – governments – NGOs	Large-scale natural or human-induced disasters
Post-conflict needs assessment (PCNA)	WFP – World Bank – UNDP – other United Nations agencies – governments	Post-conflict recovery and reconstruction

There are detailed guidelines for some of these partnership assessments, such as JAMs, CFSAMs and CAPs.