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FOOD SECURITY IN EMERGENCIES

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Emergency situations have an immediate negative influence on the food security, livelihoods, and the nutrition security of the affected population. Emergency food security interventions entail a wide range of activities, from food assistance and protection of productive activities (i.e. agriculture) in an acute emergency, to supporting value chains or access to employment in a complex or protracted crisis.

In a humanitarian crisis, food security responses should aim to meet short-term needs and reduce the need for the affected population to adopt potentially damaging coping strategies. Over time, responses should protect and restore livelihoods, stabilize or create employment opportunities and contribute to restoring longer-term food security. They should not have a negative impact on natural resources and the environment. Simply improving the availability, access to and utilization of food is not enough: food security is one of the several preconditions to being able to achieve nutrition security. Alongside food security, an individual's nutritional needs, the sanitary environment, local care practices and healthcare also need to be addressed in an integrated manner by Welthungerhilfe (WHH).

Definitions

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security has the following [four dimensions](#):

- **Food availability** – Relates to the quantity of food (of acceptable quality) physically present or expected to become available in the area of concern. It is determined by food produced in the area, food stocks, food imports and food assistance. Local markets able to deliver food are major determinants of availability. Natural disasters, conflict, shortages in agricultural labor and inputs (e.g. seeds) can each affect availability.
- **Food access** – Relates to the capacity of households to safely acquire sufficient food to satisfy the nutritional needs of all its members, through a combination of purchases, production, barter, gifts, borrowing or food assistance. Physical (e.g. damaged roads) and social barriers (e.g. ethnicity, gender), land ownership, economic barriers (market prices, unemployment, insufficient income levels) can each affect access to food.
- **Food utilization** – Relates to the use that households make of the food, including storage, processing and

preparation, and food distribution *within* the household. This dimension also takes into consideration an individual's ability to absorb and metabolize nutrients, which can be affected by a disease and/or malnutrition. Individual health issues, culture, norms and beliefs, or contaminated water can also each affect utilization.

- **Stability** - Consistent presence of the other three components *together and over time* is essential to achieve food security. Seasonality, climate and other trends may affect stability.

Nutrition security exists when food security is combined with a sanitary environment, adequate health services and proper care and feeding practices, to ensure a healthy life for all household members. The nutritional status is dependent on a broad array of factors, each of which is a necessary condition to achieve nutrition security but none of which is sufficient alone (Cf. the UNICEF Causal Model of Malnutrition in [WHD SFNS Framework, p. 21](#)).

Livelihoods (cf. the DFID [Sustainable Livelihoods Framework](#)) is a term which comprises the capabilities, assets (including natural, material and social resources) and activities used by a household for survival and future well-being. Livelihood strategies are the practical means or activities through which people use their assets to earn income and achieve other livelihood goals. A household's livelihood is considered secure when it can cope with and recover from shocks whilst also maintaining or even enhancing its capabilities and productive assets.

Standards

The aim of having standards is to improve the quality of WHH's actions during a humanitarian response and to be able to be held accountable for them. The [Humanitarian Charter](#) and [Protection Principles](#) provide the ethical and legal basis and the [SPHERE Standards](#) provide the technical standards against which WHH measures the quality of its interventions. The minimum standards for Food Security interventions in a humanitarian response are listed in [the 2018 SPHERE handbook](#) chapter 6 "Food Security and Nutrition". The 7 standards highlight the close integration of both Food Security and Nutrition interventions.

- **Interventions are designed based on evidence from the ground.** Assessments are conducted to determine the extent of food insecurity, identify those most affected and define the most appropriate response. Read [needs assessments](#).
- People receive **food assistance** that ensures their survival, upholds their dignity, prevents the erosion

of their assets and builds resilience. The food assistance's targeting methodology and distribution should be responsive, timely, transparent and safe, support dignity and be appropriate to local contexts. Read [intervention modality](#).

- **Interventions should protect and support livelihoods.** People might otherwise resort to negative coping strategies (e.g. sell their productive assets), resulting in negative irreversible outcomes.
- Women and men receive equal access to appropriate income-earning opportunities where income generation and employment are feasible livelihood strategies.
- The **provided items** (food, agriculture inputs, other items) or the transfer method should be **appropriate** to recipients (i.e. if people lack cooking facilities, aim for ready to eat food) and **acceptable** (i.e. rice instead of maize in Asia), so that they can be used efficiently and effectively at the household level. They should be **safe for human consumption/use and of appropriate quality**.
- The nutritional needs of the affected people, including the most vulnerable to undernutrition, are met (i.e. nutritionally rich and diverse food). Read [targeting](#).
- Gender and protection issues are addressed during the design of the methodologies.
- Commodities and associated costs should be well managed using impartial, transparent and responsive systems. The **capacity of service providers** to cope with the demand created is assessed (e.g. selection of a financial service provider for cash transfers, or supplier for seeds' distribution).
- **Market assessments** are essential in any intervention that might have an impact on the market. Market functionality should be restored while promoting safe access for the producers, consumers and traders. It is crucial that responses do no harm to the local markets and do not contribute to the political power of only certain groups or individuals.

Welthungerhilfe Focus

Fields of Interventions

WHH considers the four dimensions of food security together with the affected population's livelihoods, including the primary production, income generation and employment, and access to markets. This has led to the delineation of the following non-exhaustive list of potential interventions. These can all be implemented in response to slow or sudden onset crises, complex or protracted crises, as well as early recovery interventions.

- **Food assistance** - Food distribution at household level and/or the provision of cash or vouchers to enable access to food where markets are functioning.
- **Supplementary feeding** – Children under-5, pregnant and nursing mothers, and other at-risk individuals receive **food supplements**. Other context-specific vulnerable groups may be included. It is opted for in contexts of food insecurity if there is high prevalence of malnutrition and/ a high risk of an increase in acute malnutrition levels. Two types of supplementary feeding programmes are common: blanket, or targeted. The use of each depends on the levels of acute malnutrition, vulnerable population groups and the risk of an increase in acute malnutrition. See “Nutrition in Emergencies” eBrief for details.
- Provision of **cooking materials and [cooking energy](#) means**.
- **information provision, sensitization or trainings to improve the utilization of food**. E.g. sensitization on diet diversity, food hygiene, infant and young child feeding, etc.
- Protection of and support to **primary production mechanisms (agricultural production and value chains)** to ensure availability and accessibility of food. E.g. trainings, provision of production inputs/ cash to purchase the necessary inputs and services.
- Protection of and support to **income-earning activities/employment and non-agriculture value chains**. E.g. trainings, cash/input support, etc.
- Protect and promote **safe access to market goods and services** for the affected population, including producers and traders (e.g. rehabilitation of market infrastructure/roads, loans to traders...).
- Provision of [multipurpose cash](#) grants.
- Engaging in [safety nets](#) programs.
- **Food security surveillance**.

Needs Assessments

In an acute crisis, multisector initial and rapid assessments may be sufficient to obtain a picture of a specific context and to decide whether immediate assistance is required. The objective is to understand **the type, degree and extent of food insecurity and to identify those most affected groups of the population and so in turn to identify the most appropriate responses and targeting**. There might be a need to carry out further detailed food security and nutrition assessments, which require considerable time and resources. Assessment of food and nutrition security should be a continuous process, particularly in protracted crises. Whenever possible, WHH will work with the Clusters to define and organize

joint or harmonized assessment. This can greatly facilitate the process of informing intra or inter-sectoral planning. Key issues to include in the scope of needs assessments are:

- Ideally **food security and nutrition assessments should overlap**, as they identify the barriers to adequate nutrition and to food security and contribute to joint programming.
- **Nutrition**. Consider dietary requirements of specific groups, their utilization of food, potential deterioration in the nutritional status of the affected population.
- **Gather information at both household and community levels** to assess their needs and existing capacities. Consider the affected population’s access to the existing structures.
- **Identify livelihood strategies, assets and coping strategies**, consider how these have changed because of the crisis, and the consequences for household food security. A detailed assessment should identify how best to protect and/or promote these livelihood strategies.
- **Seasonality and trends**. Is the situation seasonal? Is it expected to remain the same in the foreseeable future? (i.e. livestock is safe now but will it still be safe when winter comes?) Are there any trends which might affect the current situation? (i.e. affected households can cover their needs using their savings now but for how long?)
- **Macro-economic and structural socio-political factors**, including national & international policies.
- **Market conditions**: Are the markets functioning? What might be the effect of the intervention on the local market? All assessments should include an analysis of markets that meets the [Minimum Standard for Market Analysis](#) and/or the [Minimum Economic Recovery Standards for assessments](#). Refer to [2018 SPHERE handbook](#).

Refer to the “Assessments in Emergencies” eBrief for the general principles.

Targeting

- In an emergency, **the most vulnerable to food insecurity and undernutrition are prioritized in the targeting**: pregnant and lactating women, children under 5 years old, older persons and persons with disabilities, HIV/AIDS infected persons, and context-specific vulnerable groups such as refugees and IDPs. Special attention must be given to **children under-2 and pregnant and lactating women** in order to help prevent any irreversible effects of undernutri-

tion on child development and to protect the women's health during the crucial "[1000 days](#)" period.

- The **design of the targeting methodology, including the choice of the beneficiaries' selection criteria, is a crucial step for the success of an intervention.** Context-specific issues (e.g. the presence of different population groups), the capacities of WHH and other actors, as well as the available time and resources to undertake the targeting are factors to be considered in choosing the appropriate approach. It is essential to **coordinate with other humanitarian actors.**
- When a **targeted approach** is adopted for the beneficiaries' identification (as opposed to a **blanket approach**), the targeting methodology should aim at reducing the inclusion and exclusion errors.

Intervention Modality

- Assistance can be delivered either **in-kind** (food or other inputs), through [cash or vouchers](#) to be exchanged by beneficiaries (commodity based or value-based voucher), or a combination of these.
- Assistance can be [conditional](#), when assistance is received upon fulfilment of a condition, or [unconditional](#). Conditional assistance might be opted for when the aim is to tackle additional issues next to the provision of cash/food. Examples of conditional assistance are cash/food for work (i.e. recipients participate in some community work before receiving assistance), and cash/food for training (i.e. recipients participate in some trainings before receiving assistance).
- The assistance can be [restricted](#) (to be used in a certain way) or [unrestricted](#). Restricted assistance might be opted for when the aim is to ensure that the assistance is used on specific goods and services. For example, fresh food vouchers (restricted to the purchase of fresh vegetables, fruit, dairy and meat) are used when the concern is the limited intake of micronutrients of the target population.
- [Decisions on the appropriate intervention modality](#) (in-kind or cash, opting for a conditionality or a restriction) require a context-specific analysis and a [response options analysis](#) on the cost efficiency, market functionality and access, market impacts, the flexibility of the transfer, targeting methodology, the risks of insecurity and corruption, and the 'do no harm' principle. The analysis should be based on specific evidence gathered.

Coordination & Networking

During emergencies, WHH participates in the coordination mechanisms setup in-country. WHH responses

should fall within the country Humanitarian Response Plans or complement them where they may fall short. WHH is an active participant in the [Food Security Cluster](#) at the Global level, as well as in its countries of intervention wherever the [Cluster system](#) is activated. Some specific livelihood activities may be coordinated under the [Early Recovery Cluster](#). Food Security coordination mechanisms might also be platforms acting as clusters but bearing different names (e.g.: Livelihood / Social cohesion/Basic Assistance/Food Security Working groups). Informal working groups may also exist in the absence of, or alongside clusters. Besides these, there may be useful platforms for the coordination of humanitarian actors or technical discussions, such as cash working groups. WHH also coordinates and collaborates with local authorities and government agencies involved in food security related matters (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture or Ministry of Social Affairs) to support their efforts in responding to the crisis. WHH country offices are expected to actively engage in coordination bodies during emergencies as well as in the longer-term. For instance, via participation in joint assessments or contributions to country level food security analysis (e.g. [IPC](#)).

Tools

General Definitions

ACF International, (2011). *Maximizing the Nutritional Impact of Food Security and Livelihoods Interventions. A manual for field workers.* [online] <https://bit.ly/2Hryn21>

Sphere, (2018). *The Sphere Handbook.* [online] <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/> » Food & Nutrition Security Chapter

Welthungerhilfe, (2015). *Orientation Framework: Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security.* [online] <https://bit.ly/2sVIIJg>

Needs assessments

ACF International, (2010). *Food Security and Livelihood Assessments. A practical Guide for Field Workers.* [online] <https://bit.ly/1DA4Clc>

Oxfam, (2015). *Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods (EFSL) 48-hour Assessment Tool.* [online] <https://bit.ly/2Mrfw5H>

Sphere, (2018). *The Sphere Handbook.* [online] <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/> » Appendixes about assessments: food security & livelihood, seed security, nutrition

WFP, (2009). *Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook.* [online] <https://bit.ly/2sHnG0m>

Food Assistance

ACF International, (2014). *Food Assistance. Manual for Field Practitioners.* [online] <https://bit.ly/2RZQ9xf>

IFRC, (2011). *IFRC guidelines for livelihoods programming.* [online] <https://bit.ly/2FQVxMH>

Livelihood Programming

NutVal.Net, (n.d.). [online] <http://www.nutval.net/>

SEEP, (2017). *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards.* [online] <https://seepnetwork.org/MERS>

Cash and market-based programming

CaLP, (2015). *Comparative Table of Humanitarian Market Anal-*

ysis Tools. [online] <https://bit.ly/2DwOXtd>

CaLP, (2017). *Minimum standards for market analysis in emergencies (MISMA)* [online]: <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/calp-misma-en-web.pdf>

CaLP, (2018). *Cash Based Assistance - Programme Quality Toolbox*. [online] <https://bit.ly/2U8SX8w>

Energy

WFP, (2012). *WFP Handbook on Safe Access to Firewood and alternative Energy (SAFE)*. [online] <https://bit.ly/2U2Yspk>

Monitoring and Evaluation

Action against Hunger, (2016). *Multi-Sectoral Monitoring & Evaluation. A Practical Guide for Fieldworkers*. [online] <https://bit.ly/2HpXh1M>

People in need, (2019). *IndiKit*. [online] <https://www.indikit.net/>

Training & Learning

CaLP, (n.d.). *E-learning*. [online] <https://bit.ly/2HvhTpy>

ECHO, (n.d.). *Humanitarian Food Assistance*. [online] <http://echo-elearninghfa.eu/>

FAO, (2019). *E-learning Centre*. [online] <http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/home>

Food Security Cluster, (n.d.). *Training*. [online] <https://foodsecuritycluster.net/training>

FSIN, (2019). *Capacity Development*. [online] <https://bit.ly/2Rbl0Bn>

IFRC Livelihoods Center, (n.d.). *Resources*. [online] <http://www.livelihoodscentre.org/>

WFP, (n.d.). *vam food security analysis*. [online] <http://learning.vam.wfp.org/>

Further Reading

FEWS NET, (n.d.). [online] <http://fews.net/>

IPC, (n.d.). *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification*. [online] www.ipcinfo.org/

Reach Initiative, (n.d.). [online] www.reach-initiative.org/

WFP, (n.d.). *vam food security analysis*. [online] <http://learning.vam.wfp.org/>

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