Food Security Information for Action

Livelihoods Assessment and Analysis
Lesson 2
Assessing Livelihoods

Learner Notes

This course is funded by the European Union and developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

© FAO, 2007
## Table of contents

- Learning objectives ................................................................. 2
- Introduction ........................................................................... 2
- Livelihoods assessment principles ........................................ 2
- Supporting livelihoods in different contexts ......................... 3
- Common approaches for assessing livelihoods ....................... 7
- Selecting approaches in different contexts and in emergency situations .... 24
- Selecting approaches in stable situations .................................. 25
- Staff capacity and experience .................................................. 26
- Credibility and transparency of findings .................................... 27
- Food, health and nutritional crises ............................................ 28
- Summary ............................................................................... 28
- If you want to know more.......................................................... 29
Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

• recognize how assessing livelihoods improves the analysis of food security;
• identify the main features of eight livelihoods assessment approaches; and
• understand how different livelihood assessments help to plan interventions in different food security contexts.

Introduction

During the course of this lesson, we will see how assessing livelihoods brings essential information to the analysis of food security. Adopting a livelihoods approach to food security means to pay attention to the way people live, why they live that way, and why and how this way of life changes. We will also learn about the principles and framework elements underlying livelihoods assessment and how these are applied in different approaches.

Livelihoods assessment principles

Livelihood assessments serve to identify the most appropriate livelihood interventions, which should be:

1. People centered:
Livelihoods assessments identify programme needs based on the priorities and goals defined by people themselves, and supports their own livelihoods strategies.

2. Multi level and holistic:
Assessments recognise multiple influences on people at the macro and micro level as well as the multiple actors influencing livelihoods. Assessments seek to understand the relationships between these multiple influences and their joint impact upon livelihoods. Assessments consider influences at the macro level (national and international) and at the micro level (community and household).
They also recognise the multiple actors (from the private sector to national level ministries) influencing livelihoods.

3. Dynamic:
Livelihoods change over time so that assessment must help understand and learn from change. Assessment should support positive patterns of change and help mitigate negative patterns. It recognises people’s strengths and opportunities in order to build on these for solving problems. Livelihood assessment approaches explicitly recognise the effects on livelihoods of external shocks and the longer-term processes that may erode livelihoods, such as climate change, HIV and AIDS, and economic decline.

4. Sustainable:
Understanding the sustainability of livelihood patterns involves analysing:
- resilience in the face of external shocks,
- whether populations are dependent upon external support and if this support is economically and institutionally sustainable,
- whether the pattern maintains the long-term productivity of natural resources, and
- whether their livelihoods undermines the livelihoods of others, or compromises their livelihoods options.

Supporting livelihoods in different contexts

In emergencies, the objectives of livelihood support may vary according to the stage and severity of an emergency.
Different types of livelihood support can be implemented at different stages of an emergency and can be carried out at the same time as life saving interventions.
This is even true in situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI).
Let’s have a look at the Aceh case study to see how different actions can be combined simultaneously.
Case study: Supporting livelihoods while saving lives in Aceh, Indonesia

In the first two weeks following the tsunami on December 26th 2004, many displaced families in Aceh wanted to return home. The proportion of internally displaced people (IDPs) who wanted to go home varied by location.

Assistance was requested first for burying bodies, then for water and food. People then wanted to be able to rebuild houses and recover farmland, followed by livelihood recovery. At the same time, the vast majority of IDPs had lost everything and were depending on emergency relief to meet their immediate food and non-food needs.

While implementing emergency water, sanitation, health and food distribution programmes, international agencies started cash for work (CFW) programmes almost immediately. The CFW programmes aimed to provide cash to meet immediate needs (such as food and kitchen utensils), stimulate markets, and ensure essential work activities. Work started with clearing roads and solid waste disposal. This allowed some people to return home immediately as they had road access. Once back in their home areas, further work was carried out on clearing waste, burying bodies and later on, building houses. Subsequently, CFW was used to rehabilitate farms and rebuild fishing boats. Cash grants were provided to people who wanted to re-establish businesses and to purchase assets essential to their livelihoods.

As well as emergency livelihoods programmes, work was initiated in the first month on land rights issues, and promoting sustainable access to markets for small scale timber producers.

In the most unstable situations, the main aim of emergency interventions is to save lives and, if possible, provide livelihood protection.

As stability increases, programmes may be able to build or recover assets as well as protect existing ones. Livelihoods will only become truly sustainable, however, if people have power in local, national and international markets.

The table below shows the different objectives of livelihoods programming:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of crisis</th>
<th>Objective of livelihoods programming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Livelihoods protection/mitigation (prevent erosion or destruction of assets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Save lives and livelihood protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post crisis</td>
<td>Livelihood recovery/rehabilitation (process of protecting and promoting livelihoods of people recovering from emergencies, restoring productive assets).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Livelihood promotion (improving resilience of household livelihoods, diversification of livelihood strategies, improving access to markets).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a **range of livelihoods interventions** that can theoretically be considered in emergencies interventions, regarding food distributions, employment schemes, market and production support, and advocacy.

Examples of livelihoods interventions in emergency contexts include:

- general food distributions;
- income and employment schemes: Food For Work (FFW), CFW, cash grants and micro-finance;
- market support: commodity and cash vouchers, monetisation and subsidised sales, market infrastructure, and de-stocking; and
- production support: agricultural support, livestock support and fishing support.

Working in conflict may require advocacy on respect for international humanitarian law to stop warring parties destroying or undermining livelihood strategies and assets. However, until recently most livelihoods interventions in emergencies have not extended beyond food aid and seeds and tools provision.

In **stable development contexts**¹, capacity building and working in partnership are key objectives of livelihood support. This can include building the capacity of local institutions such as local non-governmental organisations and other forms of civil society or government institutions.

Livelihoods support may also include interventions to address the **policies, institutions and process** that are part of the livelihoods framework. For example, agricultural support will often need to be accompanied by policy work on increasing access to land and land rights issues.

Support for assets and strategies is often more effective if combined with policy and advocacy work to address the policies, institutions and process that limit peoples livelihood options.

---

¹ **Stable contexts:** Stability essentially means situations in which there is peace, basic respect for human rights and that food security, malnutrition and mortality are at acceptable levels.
To support household food security, nutrition and livelihoods, an FAO-led household food security and nutrition project in Afghanistan has been successfully working in a close two-way coordination process:

- a horizontal process to build bridges across the various sectors concerned (Agriculture, Education, Health, Rural Development, Economic and social affairs),
- a vertical process, whereby local knowledge, information & experience from the field is fed back to provincial and central levels to inform policy and planning, and where central and provincial levels provide policy frameworks and technical support for project implementation at community & household levels.

Activities of the Bamyan province project (with the Aga Khan Foundation) show how nutrition was integrated in local development by building local capacities and working in partnerships: 'training cum planning' workshops enabled local staff to see by themselves how sectors integrate through malnutrition problem & solution trees for 3 different vulnerable groups in the areas where they work.

Communities designed their own projects including: nutrition education through Community Health Workers; greenhouses to increase vegetable availability; a livestock group providing sheep for women to increase milk availability; digging of wells to provide safe water.

Other similar partnerships in the province have built ownership and commitment to nutrition issues amongst communities, NGOs and government departments.
Common approaches for assessing livelihoods

We will now compare eight livelihoods assessment approaches to inform food security analysis:

1. Household and Livelihoods Security (HLS) Approach
2. Livelihoods Approach to Emergency Food Security Assessments
3. Household Economy Approach (HEA)
4. Economic Security Analysis Approach
5. Early warning Approach in Food Security Analysis
6. Food and Health Analysis of Food Insecurity
7. Vulnerable Group Profiling
8. Integrated Food Security Analysis System

It is important to notice that there is no single way to conduct livelihood assessments. There are many other approaches that also contain a livelihoods element. Moreover, approaches are sometimes taken by different agencies and applied or modified to suit particular situations. While some approaches refer specifically to livelihoods in their methodology, other approaches consider only some elements of livelihoods.

All approaches are based to some degree on the assumption that food shortages, crises and famine are due to lack of food accessibility rather than food availability.

Most approaches include a number of stages in assessment:

1. Information gathering on context that includes a description of macro-economic and social factors.
2. Identification of livelihood groups or food economy groups (population groups that employ the same means of attaining food and income).
3. An assessment of different food and income sources in normal times and the changes as a result of a particular shock. Some approaches also involve an assessment of nutritional status.

When applied in emergencies, all the assessment approaches generally include:

- estimation of the severity of food security;
- identification of vulnerable groups; and
- identification of appropriate interventions.
1. **Household and Livelihoods Security (HLS) Approach**

The Household and Livelihoods Security Approach is the only one that makes use of all aspects of the livelihoods framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective</strong></th>
<th>The objective is to provide a multi-dimensional view of <em>livelihoods and peoples goals</em> to identify programming priorities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of application</strong></td>
<td>This approach is mostly applied in development and stable situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data sources</strong></td>
<td>Data sources are primary and secondary. This approach uses quantitative and qualitative data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Methods of data collection** | Methods of primary data collection are:  
• key informant interview  
• focus groups  
• proportional piling  
• ranking  
• mapping time trends  
• seasonal calendars  
• transect walks  
• direct observation  
• household interviews  
• nutrition surveys |
| **Analysis** | This approach first determines the feasibility of different livelihood strategies leading to identifying key leverage points that allow CARE to have maximum impact on people’s livelihoods. The identification of risks and opportunities is done by the community. |
HLS has been used to identify livelihood support in stable contexts, although it is increasingly being used to identify needs in chronically vulnerable areas.

It may identify four phases of programming, according to objectives of livelihood support:

- livelihoods protection to prevent loss of assets;
- livelihoods provisioning to save lives and protect or improve nutritional and health status;
- livelihoods recovery to rehabilitate livelihoods; and
- livelihoods promotion to improve production and income-earning opportunities.

**Reference agency:** CARE

**Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Well developed holistic livelihoods framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessments able to identify a broad range of interventions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited application in situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI); it has not undergone adaptations to deal with constraints of working in conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Takes 4-6 weeks to implement, so not ideally suited to emergency contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Objectives

The objectives are:
- to determine severity of *food insecurity* in terms of risks to lives and livelihoods; and
- to identify appropriate *interventions*.

### Context of application

This approach is mainly applied in natural disasters, displaced, political emergencies.

### Data sources

Data sources are primary and secondary, and qualitative.

### Methods of data collection

Methods of primary data collection are:
- key informant interview
- focus groups
- proportional piling
- ranking
- mapping time trends
- seasonal calendars
- transect walks
- direct observation
- household interviews
- nutrition surveys

### Analysis

People’s ability to meet their food needs is analysed by looking at shifts in entitlements and by anthropometric status (proxy for nutritional status).
Risks to livelihoods are assessed by examining the type of coping strategies adopted and the proportion of the population adopting...
Different food and income sources are not quantified but food insecurity is indicated if a population suffers a large reduction in one of its main food sources.

**Use**

If people are unable to meet their immediate food needs, then the immediate response is food aid. Alternative interventions designed to support livelihoods might include support to income, agriculture and livestock/fishing.

*Reference agency: Oxfam-GB*

**Strengths**

It can identify a range of livelihood interventions as well as the need for food aid.

**Weaknesses**

This approach has been developed for natural disasters, and needs to be adapted for SCCPI.
### 3. Household Economy Approach (HEA)

The Household Economy Approach considers elements of livelihoods such as food security, income and expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective</strong></th>
<th>The objective is to estimate the impact of a shock on the ability of the household to acquire food and non-food items.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of application</strong></td>
<td>This approach is applied in natural disasters, refugees and conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data sources</strong></td>
<td>Data sources are primary and secondary; qualitative and quantitative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Methods of data collection** | Methods of primary data collection are:  
  - key informant interview  
  - focus groups  
  - proportional piling  
  - ranking  
  - mapping time trends  
  - seasonal calendars  
  - transect walks  
  - direct observation  
  - household interviews  
  - nutrition surveys  
  
  This approach uses household interviews for different wealth groups and no anthropometric surveys. |
| **Analysis** | The approach estimates likely effect of a shock on the ability of households to acquire sufficient food and maintain non-food consumption, e.g. education, health, etc. Food, cash income and expenditure are converted into food equivalent units. For the baseline, the sources of food and income have to add up to an average of 2100 kcals per person per day as the minimum food requirement for survival. Also, there are minimum non-food requirements that need to be satisfied through income and production.  
  
  The following two steps are needed to estimate whether the household faces a... |
### Use

The approach has mainly been used to rationalise food aid needs. However, information can be used for vulnerability analysis and modelling impact of interventions. The approach is increasingly being used to strengthen analysis of livelihood patterns through baseline profiles and to identify the nature of vulnerability of different food economy groups.

The approach is used by SC UK but also incorporated into other information systems, e.g. the FSAU for Somalia, WFP in south Sudan and Burundi, National Vulnerability Assessment Committee (NVAC) assessments in southern Africa and the Tanzanian government Food Security Information System (FSIS).

*Reference agency: Save the Children UK*

### Strengths

- Agreed upon and well articulated assessment framework that enables discussion and consensus building around results. This can be very important where there are concerns over data manipulation by authorities.
- Employment of baselines for livelihoods analysis allows quantification of food gap and resulting needs.
- Analysis is transparent and reproducible.

### Weaknesses

- Focus on economic aspects of food insecurity rather than wider social and political determinants.
- Does not lead to recommendations on the feasibility of targeting assistance to identified food deficit groups.
- Lack of focus on linkages between food security/livelihood status at household and community level and macro-level factors.
- Quantification of food gap can engender false sense of statistical rigor.

This approach has been developed for natural disasters, and needs to be adapted for SCCPI.
4. Economic Security Analysis Approach

The Economic Security Analysis Approach includes the following elements of livelihoods: resources, assets, strategies, obligatory expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>The objectives are to determine the risk of decapitalisation, and to intervene to prevent this.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of application</td>
<td>This approach is applied in conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Data sources are primary data, quantitative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data collection</td>
<td>Methods of primary data collection are mainly household interviews and anthropometric surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>The stages of assessment and analysis are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify regions where population is in danger due to armed conflict or natural/economic disaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify areas with specific risk factors to select communities to be assessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify communities or groups who are vulnerable because of their ethnic, economic, social and cultural characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collect information on renewable resources, assets, and expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Households may be sampled until the overall picture is consistent and there is much emphasis on the knowledge of local staff and experienced ICRC staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The analysis involves determining the following three stages of economic insecurity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) Renewable resources are greater than obligatory expenses and the household is self-sufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Renewable resources are insufficient to meet obligatory expenses and capital without interest is used up, resulting in decapitalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Both renewable resources and capital without interest are insufficient to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
meet obligatory expenses and productive assets are used up, resulting in destitution.

### Use

The approach is geared to assessing need for economic interventions. The range of responses is determined by the stages of food insecurity.

1) The first stage indicates need for preventive measures, including political negotiation to prevent abuses.
2) In the second stage, responses may include economic support to prevent decapitalisation including food aid, veterinary support and means to diversify and intensify production.
3) In the third stage, survival relief is the main purpose. Once the crisis is over, economic rehabilitation is provided to restore the means of production to a level necessary for household economic security.

*Reference agency: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

### Strengths

- It incorporates an analysis of political vulnerability that is crucial in situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI).
- Approach is rapid and usually carried out by experienced staff.

### Weaknesses

- Not systematic so that assessments depend on the experience of the assessors.
- Difficult to compare severity of situations between countries or between regions in the same country.
5. **Early warning Approach in Food Security Analysis**

The Early Warning Approach in Food Security Analysis includes Food Security as element of livelihoods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective</strong></th>
<th>The objective is to manage threats to food security through provision of timely and analytical <em>early warning</em> and <em>vulnerability</em> information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of application</strong></td>
<td>This approach is applied to understanding the impact of hazards on household food security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data sources</strong></td>
<td>Data sources are secondary data, mainly quantitative. Primary data are used for Food Security Vulnerability Profiles (FSVPs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods of data collection</strong></td>
<td>This approach builds on Household Economy Approach and uses secondary data and primary data collection methods such as key informant and household interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Changes to food security are analysed by comparing secondary data, e.g. prices, vegetation, rainfall, etc to data for normal years. These data are then applied to FSVPs. These profiles examine food security levels and inter-annual variation of particular population groups with households categorised as those employing broadly similar food access strategies and experiencing the same level, trend and variability of food security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong></td>
<td>The approach is mainly used to provide early warning of food insecurity and to identify at-risk populations to inform timely response. Construction of FSVPs is also used in situations of chronic food insecurity to inform recommendations for livelihood programming in the longer term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reliance on secondary data and application to livelihood profiles makes it suitable for contexts where it is not possible to collect primary data, e.g. conflict induced emergencies, where there are high levels of insecurity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quantitative data verifiable and credible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Absence of a link between risk and its impact on food or income sources of specific livelihood groups. The construction of Food Security Vulnerability Profiles is an attempt to create this link.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Little capacity for, or experience of, conflict early warning or monitoring and assessing the impact of conflict on different livelihood groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. **Food and Health Analysis of Food Insecurity**

The Food and Health Analysis of Food Insecurity considers the following elements of livelihoods: food security and access to health care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Its objective is to determine the stage of food insecurity and appropriate <strong>food and health interventions</strong>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of application</td>
<td>This approach is applied in conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Data sources are primary data, qualitative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data collection</td>
<td>Methods of primary data collection are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• key informant interviews;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• focus groups; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• anthropometric surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>This approach involves the identification of the stage of food insecurity. There are three stages:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) Food insecurity, with associated coping strategies defined as insurance strategies, e.g. reversible coping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Food crisis, with associated crisis strategies, e.g. irreversible coping, sale of productive assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Famine/health crisis and death, with distress strategies, e.g. no coping mechanisms left, starvation and migration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information collection is specified for each stage of food insecurity. During food insecurity, early signs are monitored. In a food crisis, intermediate indicators like food prices, access to food and health indicators are monitored. In famine, outcome indicators of malnutrition, morbidity and death are important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Use
In food insecure situations, the aim is to preserve livelihoods by, for example, FFW or support for health structures to treat individual cases of malnutrition. In food crisis, the aim is to ensure sufficient household food security via general rations. Health care systems and water resources may also require support. In famine situations, the emphasis is on saving lives through feeding and mortality surveillance.

*Reference agency: Medecins San Frontières-Holland.*

### Strengths
- It is easy to understand and use.
- It provides staff with a shared notion of concepts.

### Weaknesses
It is based on sequences of coping strategies applicable to slow onset drought, therefore not as suitable for situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI).
7. **Vulnerable Group Profiling**

The Vulnerable Group Profiling approach considers all elements of livelihoods that impact on food security and nutrition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>The objective is to identify in a participatory way appropriate <strong>food security and nutrition interventions</strong> at various levels (community, district and national).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of application</td>
<td>Mostly development and stable situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Data sources are primary data, qualitative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Methods of data collection | Methods of primary data collection are:  
  - national and/or subnational level workshops ('training-cum planning'),  
  - key informant interview,  
  - community-level focus group discussions.  
  Other PRA techniques used in nutrition appraisals include: proportional piling,  
  - ranking,  
  - mapping time trends,  
  - seasonal calendars,  
  - transect walks,  
  - direct observation,  
  - household interviews. |
| Analysis | Data collection needs are defined and findings are analysed, using the Sustainable Livelihoods framework adapted to food security analysis. The analytical framework used as a lens through which to view the interaction among micro-, meso- and macro-level factors to more fully understand the relationship between national-level dynamics and household-level vulnerability. SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is used to map out key dynamic factors influencing present and future food insecurity. |
## Use

Another important tool is problem tree analysis, which allows a systematic identification of the main causes of food insecurity and explicitly focuses on establishing causal links. The nutrition analysis and profiling work uses the causal framework of malnutrition. Problem- and solution-tree analysis carried out by local district and community people to raise.

## Strengths

Vulnerable Group Profiling has been used to identify appropriate types of food security and nutrition interventions that are based on effective needs in chronically vulnerable areas as defined by community and government representatives. In nutrition programming, profiles are also used to raise local understanding of nutrition and food security issues, to develop community action plans and identify baseline variables for project management.

*Reference Agency: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

Profiling work is owned by communities for their own use.
8. Integrated Food Security Analysis System

The Integrated Food Security Analysis approach refers specifically to livelihoods in the description of its methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>The objectives are to determine severity of food insecurity in terms of risks to lives and livelihoods and to identify appropriate interventions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of application</td>
<td>Approach developed in Somalia, a complex emergency setting. Adaptation to development settings is currently being explored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Primary and secondary; quantitative and qualitative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data collection</td>
<td>FSAU utilizes a wide range of research methods for primary data collection:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• nutritional anthropometry and dietary assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• satellite imagery and geographic information systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• market analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• household surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• coping strategies index (CSI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• crop and livestock production surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• focus groups and key informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• participatory research methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>FSAU specifically developed the Food Security Analysis System (FSAS) that holistically integrates conceptual, operational and analytical aspects of its work, and is underpinned by livelihoods analysis. Within the broadly accepted conceptual food security pillars of access, availability, utilization, and stability, the FSAS operationally and conceptually draws together:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Core sectors for analysis—pastoralism, agriculture, climate, markets, nutrition, conflict and natural resources,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scales of analysis—macro, meso and micro levels, with emphasis on the meso level scale of Livelihood Zones,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Core analytical activities—baseline livelihoods analysis, annual food security vulnerability projections, rapid food security and nutrition assessments, livelihoods key indicator monitoring at both the macro and meso level, nutrition surveillance and analysis, and applied research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information support activities—database development, Digital Library,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Use

A central piece of the FSAS is the **Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)**, a classification system for Situational Analysis that is effectively used to communicate complex analysis to UN, NGO, and government agencies, donors and media. 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.

Each Phase is linked to a comprehensive set of **Key Reference Outcomes** on human welfare and livelihoods to guide the classification. 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.

**Reference Agency: Food Security Analysis Unit in Somalia.**

### Strengths

Unique characteristics of the FSAS include:

- **Holistic** understanding of behaviours and structures that constitute peoples’ livelihoods, with ultimate interest in food security outcomes.
- **Multi-scale** approach, with a focus on meso-level analysis based on Livelihood Zones, while drawing from an understanding of macro and micro level analysis
- **Mixed methods**, including quantitative and qualitative analysis on secondary and primary data
- **Integration of sectoral analysis**, whereby key sectors are analyzed in sufficient depth, as well as breadth to ensure strong linkages between sectors and hence a holistic approach.
- **Analysis of both behaviours (livelihood strategies) and structures (livelihood assets)** to enable strategic short and long-term interventions to promote food security.

IPC most salient strengths are: consistent and meaningful structure to the final statement, increased response effectiveness, greater analytical transparency.
and accountability, adaptable by a broad range of information systems.

Selecting approaches in different contexts and in emergency situations

The approaches described above have been developed by different agencies. The need to develop agency-specific assessment approaches partly reflects the mandate and capacity of agencies to implement certain types of programme (hence the need for, and emphasis on, certain types of information) and also the types of situation in which agencies work. While no one approach is best for all situations, certain approaches confer advantage in particular contexts. The analysis of context should influence the choice of assessment method. It should also be remembered that certain approaches could be modified to suit a particular context.

In emergency situations, assessments need to be conducted rapidly in order to mobilise resources - especially where the need is for livelihood protection, e.g. preventing sale of key assets, or damaging coping strategies.

For instance, Livelihoods Approach to Emergency Food Security, Economic Security Analysis Approach, Food and Health Analysis of Food Insecurity are approaches that have been designed for rapid implementation, and therefore can be useful in emergency situations.

In situations of chronic conflict and political instability, assessments may not only need to be very rapid but it may only be possible to interview a small number of households or key informants.

The Economic Security Analysis Approach is well suited to such a context and, in extreme situations, those conducting assessments will only interview people who have managed to escape a location where there is life-threatening insecurity.

2 Tip: using a transparent approach

In many ways, what is most important about an approach is not the methodology itself but that the approach is transparent, easy to understand and credible. After all, the primary purpose of any assessment is to convince decision makers to commit resources for a particular type of intervention. Thus, whatever approach is adopted and used in a particular context, it is vital to involve those who will use and respond to the information in the development of the methodology. At the very least, there must be clear communication channels between those designing and conducting the assessment and those that will use the information.
Moreover, approaches which rely on secondary data and modelling based on previously established livelihood profiles may be especially useful, e.g. the Early warning Approach in food security analysis.

**Situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI)**

In situations of chronic conflict and political instability, it may not be possible to collect certain types of information, e.g. on illegal or immoral activities, so that such information cannot be factored into considerations of coping capacity.

Approaches that are based on a sequential process of behavioural change and coping may be less applicable in situations of conflict where coping capacity may be rapidly eroded. Livelihood groupings may change and become more homogenous as livelihood options are shut off. Vulnerability may therefore be better described in terms of political or ethnic affiliation or in terms of security.

However, describing risk in such terms may be difficult for agencies and may compromise agency relations with government or insurgents and ultimately affect their capacity to work unhindered in a country.

It is often assumed that livelihood interventions cannot be implemented in emergencies (especially SCCPI). However, there is increasing experience that certain interventions are feasible (income, agricultural, and market support).

Thus, approaches which are able to identify a broad range of livelihood support needs are well suited to emergencies.

**Selecting approaches in stable situations**

In a stable situation there will be more time to carry out the livelihoods assessment than in an emergency, i.e. there will be less pressure to mount an intervention immediately.

Household and Livelihoods Security (HLS) Approach, Household Economy Approach, Vulnerable Group Profiling are approaches that have been designed for situations where the need for intervention is not so urgent, and require comprehensive construction of a baseline on livelihood patterns.

In stable situations there will be greater potential to implement a broad range of livelihood interventions, e.g. livelihoods rehabilitation and promotion and capacity building.

For instance, Household and Livelihoods Security, Livelihoods Approach to Emergency Food Security, Vulnerable Group Profiling, Integrated Food Security Analysis are approaches that provide information on different kinds of intervention options. In particular, one of the strengths
of the Household and Livelihoods Security approach is to enable the identification of a broad range of interventions.

In stable situations, the factors which create livelihood vulnerability and risk are likely to be due to long-established political and institutional dynamics. Therefore, assessments must be able to identify political and institutional factors to be addressed in order to improve livelihood status. As a consequence, establishing **linkages between the macro-level** (national and international) and **the micro-level** (community and household) is critical.

At the same time, agencies which perform this type of analysis will require capacity to advocate for political and institutional change where identified as a factor undermining livelihoods status. The following is an example where a livelihoods assessment established links between micro and macro-level:

**Example: A survey by CARE in Somalia in 2005**

The survey was explicitly set out to assess the immediate, intermediate and underlying causes of livelihood insecurity. This encompassed all elements of the livelihoods framework. The assessment found that CARE had primarily focussed on addressing the immediate causes of livelihood failure through food aid, and that it was important to start addressing the intermediate causes, more connected to public service provision, through efforts to improve education, skills training, strengthening production systems, building community assets and upgrading the skills of local institutions. At the level of underlying causes, recommendations included addressing clan based marginalisation issues, such as access to land, as well as advocacy for addressing economic under development and governance.

**Staff capacity and experience**

Livelihood assessments require certain skills and training. Thus, all approaches require some capacity for participatory appraisal, e.g. key informant interviews, focus group discussions. Enumerators also require high levels of observational and analytical skills during interviewing. They must also be able to synthesise findings and construct succinct reports.

The following are some considerations related to skills and training in different contexts:

1. **In widespread emergencies affecting large numbers of dispersed communities.**
In widespread emergencies affecting large numbers of dispersed communities, it may be
difficult to train sufficient numbers of enumerators rapidly for specific approaches, e.g. HEA and
HLS. In such situations it may be more appropriate to use an ICRC type of approach, where
only a few households are sampled, or a FEWS NET type of approach, where greater emphasis
is placed on applying secondary data to existing livelihood profiles.

2. **In stable situations, where there is greater time for training and conducting the
assessment.**

In stable situations an objective may be to build up sustainable capacity within country to
implement a specific assessment approach.

3. **Where political and institutional issues contribute significantly to livelihoods risk
and vulnerability.**

It is also important to recognise that where political and institutional issues are emerging as
significant contributors to livelihoods risk and vulnerability, it may be necessary to build up
advocacy skills within the agency conducting the assessments.

These cannot be rapidly acquired or inculcated in country programme staff. Thus, there may be
little point in collecting such information if the agency lacks capacity or commitment to act upon
findings.

**Credibility and transparency of findings**

In situations where assessment findings may be sensitive, it is important to have an approach
that is perceived as **objective and transparent.**

Where approaches include a large subjective element, findings are more easily critiqued,
disputed and at worst, ignored.

One of the significant advantages of **HEA approach** is that it has an easily understood
framework that enables discussion and consensus building around the results. This is less the
case for other approaches described above and may partly explain why a number of agencies,
institutions and governments have adopted the HEA approach or elements of the approach.
Food, health and nutritional crises

Although humanitarian crises are invariably multi-sectoral, certain sectors may be more affected than others, and may therefore play a greater role in contributing to mortality. Thus, where an acute emergency has affected food production and food prices, the overriding need may be for emergency food aid. In such situations many would argue that the Household Economy Approach is best suited to quantifying the food deficit. Other emergencies may be more of a health crisis, e.g., Afghanistan 2002. In such situations, the assessment approach should be more able to identify health problems and needs, e.g., the approach on Food and health analysis of food security. In other situations, the outcome of the crisis may be widespread malnutrition. Here, livelihoods assessment approaches should contain a nutritional assessment capacity, e.g., Household and Livelihoods Security Approach, Livelihoods Approach to Emergency Food Security and Food and Health Analysis of Food Security.

Summary

- Livelihood interventions aim to provide livelihood protection, rehabilitation or promotion, depending on the context.
- Livelihood assessments serve to identify the most appropriate livelihood interventions. They should be people centered, multi-level and holistic, dynamic and sustainable.
- In this lesson we have compared eight approaches which have been developed and used by specific agencies. Differences partly reflect their mandate and programme implementation capacities and also the types of situation in which agencies work.
- There are many other approaches, associated with other agencies, that also contain a livelihoods element.
- While no one method is best for all situations, certain approaches confer advantage in particular contexts. The analysis of context should exert influence over choice of assessment method.
Moreover, although the eight approaches are described as agency approaches, there is some evidence that they are taken by other agencies and applied or modified to suit particular situations.

If you want to know more...

- **Information on approaches:**
  - CARE’s HLS Approach: [http://www.careinternational.org.uk/?lid=74](http://www.careinternational.org.uk/?lid=74)
  - SC UK HEA: [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)
  - USAID’s FEWS NET: [www.fews.net](http://fews.net)
  - FAO/FSAU: [www.fsnau.org](http://www.fsnau.org)

- **Online resources:**
  - Livelihood monitoring and evaluation: Improving the impact and relevance of development interventions. Turton: [http://www.livelihoods.org/post/docs/tur-me01.rtf](http://www.livelihoods.org/post/docs/tur-me01.rtf)

- **Additional readings:**
  - A critical review to approaches of assessing and monitoring livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict and political instability. ODI Working paper191
  - The use of participatory methods for livelihoods assessment in situations of political instability: A case study from Kosovo. ODI working paper 190