5. Policy gaps in complex emergencies

Crisis interventions in the realm of food security tend to reflect a narrow range of responses dominated by the provision of food aid and agricultural inputs. As protracted crises become more apparent and emergency trends more predictable, the limitations of standard responses raise new questions. How can food security responses be strengthened to address the underlying causes of chronic and protracted crises? When is food aid required and how does it complement other interventions? Is there a balance between the ideal crisis response and the reality, in which political, security and timing factors may sometimes prevail?

In answering these questions, policy gaps emerge on many levels. For donors and international agencies, the challenge in responding to long-term emergency trends reveals gaps in the area of decision-making and response. Donors and international agencies pay insufficient attention to distinguishing appropriate responses in crisis, with interventions tending to address the symptoms rather than underlying causes.

Policy gaps in decision-making and response are caused by a range of factors. Information in a crisis is often fragmented, lacks comparability and is not used in a strategic way (Maxwell and Watkins, 2003). Programme responses tend to be guided by one-off needs assessments driven by resource availability and agency capacities, without linkage to ongoing monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment (Darcy and Hofmann, 2003). Funding for complex emergencies is inconsistent and unpredictable, with a bias towards short-term programming.

Programme innovations are therefore required to ensure that decision-making and response mechanisms address immediate as well as longer-term priorities. Improving existing assessment tools and ensuring common terms, definitions and frameworks for analysing food security is part of the answer. Further effort is also required to address institutional shortcomings at the national and international levels.

Policy gaps

In recent years, concern has increased about the scope and nature of international response in complex emergencies (Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton, 2005). Crises that stretch into the longer term demand responses with an extensive planning horizon, which must also be adapted to diverse circumstances. Yet there is little in the way of established good practice in this regard.

Recent trends have led to a resurgence of interest in what has been recognized for some time as an intensely problematic interface between the humanitarian and development spheres of aid intervention in complex emergencies and protracted crises. There are signs that these two domains, hitherto with separate institutional, funding and staffing arrangements, as well as distinct aims and principles, are showing a capacity for convergence.

The food-security policy gap can be seen as an aspect of this "humanitarian–development divide", the bridging of which has long been a subject of debate among practitioners and analysts concerned with disasters and emergencies (Flores, Khwaja and White, 2005). To meet this challenge different policy frameworks have been devised (e.g. European Commission [EC] Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development and the FAO Twin-Track Approach).

Donors and international agencies find it difficult to agree on the relative scale and severity of a given crisis, to determine the point at which a crisis becomes "critical" and to decide whether interventions are required for transitory needs, chronic factors or both (ODI, 2005a). The case study of the recent response to the Greater Horn of Africa

(Box 13 in the previous chapter) illustrates these challenges in the context of complex emergency situations (ODI, 2006).

What is most striking in the case study is the degree to which the link between chronic and transitory needs appears to be compromised, with a resulting set of policy interventions that seem inconsistent with the scale of conflict and institutional breakdown in the region. Another notable feature is the perceived lateness of the international community in responding to the crisis, despite the predictions from early warning and assessment information. Related to this is the strong bias of funding towards the "food aid" sector alone, an issue that is addressed below.

Challenges in decision-making and response

The policy gaps in decision-making and response stem from a range of diverse factors. This chapter concerns itself with just three critical areas: information use, needs assessment and the nature of financing for complex emergencies. These issues are explored in further detail, with potential solutions to improve programme responses later explored.

Strategic information use

As emergencies increase in frequency and severity, and the distinction between transitory and chronic crises becomes more difficult to distinguish, demands for improved humanitarian information use have proliferated (Maxwell and Watkins, 2003). Recognizing this trend, a broad range of initiatives have focused on improving the data available to decision-makers to address new conceptions of relations between relief and development and to distinguish between acute and chronic vulnerability: the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS); the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Mapping System (FIVIMS); the Humanitarian Information Centres of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Web-based information sharing platforms such as Relief Web.

A range of information-related problems persist, which highlight the degree to which decision-making sometimes takes place in the absence of crucial information, which should be the basis for clear understanding of the underlying nature of a crisis and its effective response.

The comparability and credibility of information is an important concern. The lack of system-wide information management standards, systems and indicators is a constraint in supporting operational and strategic planning requirements. This arises particularly where a range of sectoral information is required (e.g. nutrition, water and sanitation, protection) but competing information lacks interoperability. Information overload and fragmentation often result, and may actually increase uncertainty in decision-making in humanitarian work (Currion, 2006; UNOCHA, 2002). Strategic information dissemination (e.g. targeted information channels, manageable formats) tailored to a range of information users (e.g. donors, media and private sector) is critical.

The link between information and programming response is a related issue. For example, a question raised in the context of the humanitarian crisis in the Niger relates to the manner in which information was interpreted, and the subsequent analysis of response options informing decision-making (ODI, 2005b). In the case of the Niger in 2005, it has been argued that the rationale for the food security strategy undertaken – subsidized cereal sales, cereal banks, food and cash for work, subsidized fodder provision and curative and preventive veterinary care – was not analysed or adequately monitored, despite the availability of information that might have indicated that such a response was unsuited to the needs of the target population.

Needs assessment

An area of significant controversy relates to the degree to which needs assessment processes have tended to guide programme responses in crisis situations. The reliability and objectivity of agency assessment processes have been widely debated. As Darcy and Hofmann (2003, p. 16) assert, "*needs assessment is often conflated with the formulation of responses, in ways that can lead to resource-led intervention and close down other (perhaps more appropriate) forms of intervention*". Standard needs-

based approaches have therefore become associated with supply-driven analysis of requirements, with front-loaded assessments failing to capture the changing nature of needs and risks as crises evolve.

From the food security perspective, the controversies surrounding needs assessment raise a number of concerns. Needs assessments are rarely the product of intersectoral analyses, and more often than not reflect individual agency expertise and institutional priorities. The link between needs assessment and effective programming has therefore been tenuous. Assessment processes have remained ad hoc and difficult to compare and analyse.

Within the broad field of "humanitarian assessments" there are a number of different concepts and terms that are easily confused, but conceptually distinct, including Emergency Food Needs Assessment (EFNA), Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) and Emergency Needs Assessment (ENA) (Haan, Majid and Darcy, 2006). In this context, coordination between relevant agencies and decision-makers has not been strong and therefore evidence-based approaches have not been favored. This has created a climate of mistrust and introduced biases in the way in which needs are assessed and responded to (Darcy and Hofmann, 2003).

Particularly in the context of food aid, humanitarian assessments have been criticized for the practice of incorporating assessments into emergency appeals. In 2003 WFP set out to address these concerns through the Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (SENAC) project. The progress and continued work of SENAC deserves special attention and is outlined in Box 16.

BOX 16
WFP and the project for Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity

The reliability and objectivity of needs assessments has come into sharp focus. In the case of WFP, particular criticisms have been levied against the practice of incorporating assessments into emergency appeals, which risks to create distortions in the way information is presented, and in particular, overstressing of the importance of food aid while neglecting alternative ways of restoring livelihoods both after and during an emergency. These concerns were especially expressed in response to WFP's assessments of food needs arising from the southern Africa food crisis in 2002.

Consequently, in 2004 the WFP Executive Board approved a policy and a 30-month implementation plan to strengthen WFP's emergency needs assessment capacity. The Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (SENAC) project aims to reinforce WFP's ability to assess humanitarian needs in the food sector during emergencies through more accurate and impartial needs assessments.

Specifically, SENAC aims to: (i) improve WFP's accountability and transparency on Emergency Food Security Assessments; (ii) produce and test better assessment methods and guidance; (iii) improve the availability and management of pre-crisis information in countries exposed to recurrent and protracted emergencies; and (iv) strengthen WFP's field capacity by deploying assessment specialists in its six regional bureaus.

The SENAC project is guided by a steering committee comprised of donor representatives, and by an international advisory group of food security experts representing academia, FAO and other UN agencies, the World Bank and NGO partners. To date the work has resulted in the generation of preliminary guidelines for Emergency Food Security Assessment, the preparation of desk studies on a number of food security and assessment-related topics, the conduct of pre-crisis baseline surveys and inputs to food-security monitoring systems in several countries. These efforts will continue in 2007 and be mainstreamed in 2008.

Source: WFP, 2005b.

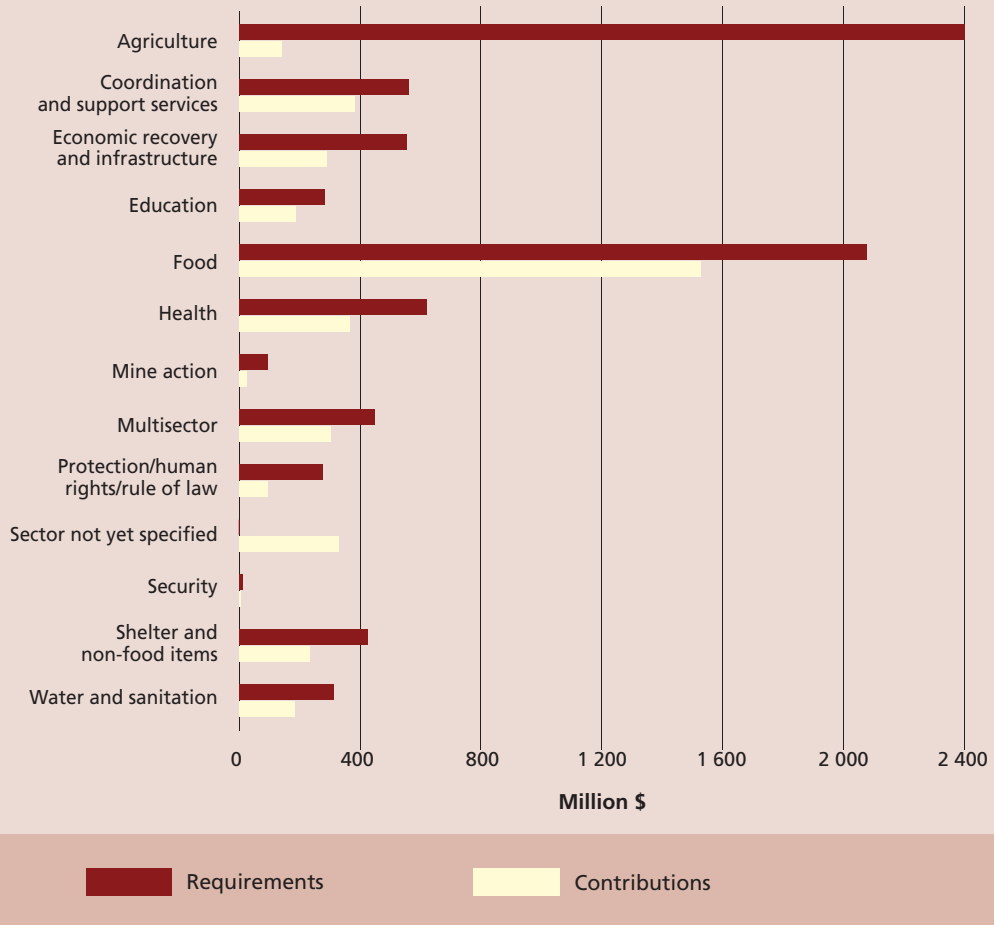
Financing for complex emergencies

The structure of humanitarian financing is a limiting factor in decision-making and response, and cannot be divorced from the capacity of agencies to support early recovery and development efforts.

As noted in the previous chapter (see Box 15), financing trends for complex emergencies are marked by low and unpredictable funding levels, which can vary across different crises and the various sectors (e.g. logistics, health, nutrition). The United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) is a mechanism aimed at streamlining the approach taken by UN institutions and their partners in appealing for funding for emergency relief operations. Since its establishment in the 1990s, an average of 60 percent of the total figure requested has been met by donors, with the share for food aid within the consolidated appeals process being typically much higher (Webb, 2003). During 1994–2001 the donor response to WFP's food aid request within the UN CAP was on average 85 percent, compared with only 58 percent for all other sectors combined (UNOCHA, 2002). This trend is further highlighted in Figure 10, which details global CAP requirements and pledges in 2005 across main sectors based on figures provided by the Financial Tracking Service of UNOCHA.

Recent trends show mixed progress in breaking this cycle of underfunding. In 2003, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative marked a commitment among donors to improve funding practice in humanitarian emergencies. A central part of the GHD initiative included an effort to "allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessment". At that time,

FIGURE 10
Funding requirements and contributions



Source: UNOCHA Financial Tracking Service.

humanitarian assistance had reached 10 percent of overall development assistance, which had stabilized to approximately €5.7 billion between 1999 and 2002 (ECOSOC, 2006).

While the GHD has helped to promote good donor practice, it has yet to have a substantial impact on the flow of funds towards underfunded crises or sectors (ECOSOC, 2006). During 2003–2005, humanitarian assistance increased by more than €2billion in two consecutive years; however, the bulk of increased assistance has gone towards large-scale disasters including those in Afghanistan, Iraq and tsunami-affected countries (ECOSOC, 2006). More recent reforms of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) are noteworthy, and are returned to later.

While the disproportionate funding is sometimes attributed to "compassion fatigue" or the "CNN effect", a number of political and economic factors also come into play. Financing for complex emergencies is compromised by short-term funding horizons in donor budgets, and the earmarking of donor funds for specific UN or other international agencies (Levine and Chastre, 2004). In practice, this impedes long-term planning, which is increasingly required as agencies move to professionalize and strengthen organizational capacity. It also drives an increasingly competitive aid environment, where UN agencies and international actors chase down limited resources, often for contrasting sets of interventions including normative analysis, leadership, coordination and service delivery (Dalton *et al*., 2003).

Furthermore, the sectoral bias of funding has also been attributed to shortcomings within the UN system (Smillie and Minnear, 2003; Darcy and Hofmann, 2003). As discussed previously, the presentation of analysis and prioritization of response has rarely compelled donor agencies to adjust funding. Similarly, coordination between agencies and other international actors has often been ineffective, with leadership from the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and local authorities also lacking. Finally, the respective response capacities of different agencies also vary, which encourages the repeated mobilization of resources around tried and tested interventions. These factors have converged to perpetuate a bias towards more tangible and fungible responses to meet immediate needs.

Improving decision-making and response

To improve decision-making and response, a range of innovations are required to strengthen analysis and assessment and address institutional limitations at the national and international levels. Strategies to achieve this will now be explored in closer detail, drawing in particular from country-based and interagency experiences.

Linking information to action: role of analysis

As discussed previously, decision-making often takes place in the absence of crucial information – information that should instead provide the basis to understand the underlying nature of a crisis and to plan an effective response.

Improved analysis is required, with a focus on the following areas:

- *Technical consensus and a common language.* Already, a range of initiatives exist to standardize core elements of humanitarian analysis and response, e.g. the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART), CAP Needs Analysis Framework and the Sphere Project, a humanitarian charter seeking to establish minimum standards in humanitarian response. Improved analytical approaches for food security are required to ensure common terms, definitions and frameworks. Particular clarification is required to classify and compare the severity of diverse food-security scenarios and their impacts.
- *Evidence-based approach.* There is also a need to ensure that responses are based on an evidence of need. This entails comparability and credibility of existing baseline and early warning information, and the willingness of agencies and donors to support more transparent response protocols.
- *Strategic responses*. The menu of possible interventions for mitigating a crisis needs to be fully considered,

rather than resorting to a supply-side-driven response. The possible criteria that might determine the appropriateness of a response are often overlooked.

The increased scope for normative analysis is limited in humanitarian response, because resources are more often prioritized for assessment and evaluation of impact (ODI, 2005a). It has been suggested that the lack of a common basis for measuring and comparing levels of need presents a major stumbling block to prioritization, impartial decision-making and accountability. This applies particularly in chronic crises, where the risk of institutional or state incapacity is often evident well before a crisis emerges, yet the mobilization of responses only emerges during extreme scenarios. A more holistic problem analysis that identifies structural issues associated with chronic food insecurity is therefore required.

In this regard, an integrated overall understanding of livelihoods has been the most significant change in food security analysis in recent years. However, this still presents many challenges (Maxwell, 2006). Although the basic asset categories and most of the dominant livelihood-strategy categories are now well known, more recent attention has focused on understanding the vulnerability context, and the institutional and policy constraints to livelihoods.

In meeting these challenges, the Integrated Humanitarian and Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), developed by FAO in Somalia but in wide usage in the drought crisis of the Greater Horn of Africa, is increasingly recognized as a significant attempt to draw multiple sources of information into a single analysis of food security and humanitarian needs (FAO, 2006f). As argued by Maxwell (2006), and elaborated in the case study below, the application of this tool highlights how far the humanitarian and food security sector has to go to achieve a "gold standard" with regard to indicators, analysis and definitions – but it marks a step in the right direction.

The IPC is a standardized scale that integrates food security, nutrition and livelihood information into a clear statement about the severity of a crisis and the implications for humanitarian response. The IPC Reference Table (Figure 11) provides details of the main phase categories: (1) generally food secure; (2) chronically food insecure; (3) acute food and livelihood crisis; (4) humanitarian emergency; and (5) famine/humanitarian catastrophe. A comprehensive set of reference outcomes on human welfare and livelihoods are associated with each phase. These are based on international standards and criteria to ensure robustness and comparability, and include:

- *Analysis templates:* to organize key pieces of information in a transparent manner and facilitate analysis for substantiating a phase classification and guiding response.
- *Cartographic protocols:* a set of standardized mapping and visual communication tools, which effectively convey key information concerning situation analysis in a single map.
- *Population tables*: to communicate population estimates consistently and effectively by administrative boundaries, livelihood systems and livelihood zones.

The IPC summarizes a situation analysis, which is a distinct yet often overlooked stage in food security analysis. Situational analysis is the basis for identifying fundamental aspects of a situation (e.g. severity, causes, magnitude). Ideally, the analysis is backed by a broad-based consensus among key stakeholders including governments, UN agencies and NGOs, donors, the media and target communities.

For example, Figure 12 includes a visual representation of the IPC classification system based on the FSAU's recent food security projection for the period following the 2005/06 Deyr season (the short and less reliable rainy season, from October to January). The map brings unique aspects of the IPC for food security situation analysis into focus.

Key aspects highlighted in the map include:

- *Severity.* The IPC includes the complete spectrum of food security situations – from general food security to famine. It emphasizes the need for food security interventions during all phases, not just when an emergency breaks out. The inclusion of the Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (Phase 3) underlines the importance of understanding livelihood dynamics and their links to food security.

- *Geographic coverage.* The livelihood zone is the IPC's core unit for spatial analysis. An analysis of livelihood zones allows for a better understanding of how people within a given livelihood system typically derive their food and income, and what their expenditure patterns and coping strategies are. Livelihood assets such as the Key Reference characteristic are accounted for, and highlight how livelihood endowments interact with institutions to enable (or undermine) livelihoods.
- *Immediate and proximate causes*. The attributes of a given crisis are defined based on an understanding of hazards, vulnerabilities and underlying causes. In particular, the framework incorporates risk, which indicates the probability of a hazard event, exposure and specific vulnerabilities of livelihood systems.
- *Projected trends/scenarios.* While the phase classification describes the current or imminent situation for a given area, early warning levels are used as a predictive tool for communicating the risk of a worsening phase.

The operational value of the IPC lies not only in providing criteria for a consistent situation analysis, but also in explicitly linking that evaluation to appropriate responses which build on the FAO Twin-Track approach and other frameworks.

Currently, both FAO and WFP are working to integrate elements of the IPC into joint work in the food security component of the CAP Needs Analysis Framework (NAF), a tool to help humanitarian coordinators and country teams organize and present existing information on humanitarian needs in a coherent and consistent manner.

Improving needs assessment

As discussed previously, concern with needs assessment practices has focused on integrating assessment as part of an ongoing response linked to different stages of the project cycle, rather than as a front-loaded activity designed to justify one-off funding proposals. A key issue is how the function of needs assessment can be strengthened to inform decision-making processes, for example in determining whether to intervene, the nature and scale of the intervention, prioritization and allocation of resources and programme design and planning (Darcy and Hofmann, 2003).

Based on these experiences, the following priorities can be extracted:

- *Integrating needs assessment into ongoing processes*. Needs assessment should be contextualized as part of a continuous process. This brings into focus the role of existing early warning and baseline information systems, as well as possible links to food security monitoring and evaluation. Maxwell and Watkins (2003) address these concerns by linking EFSA to the broader food security information and analysis system. Such a system has a number of precursor and follow-up components to the EFSA process itself, which occurs on an ad hoc basis as required. The precursor components add technical rigour and efficiency to the EFSA, whereas the follow-up components link EFSA to programme implementations, including design, advocacy and exit strategy (Haan, Majid and Darcy, 2006).
- *Interagency and joint collaborations.* The changing nature of needs assessment activities points to increasing scope for interagency and joint assessments to agree on existing needs and to identify priority responses across sectors. An example of coordinated planning is the CAP NAF, a tool to help UN agencies organize and present existing information on humanitarian needs in a coherent and consistent manner. Starting in 2005, FAO and WFP have collaborated on a joint strategy to support the food security section of the CAP NAF (UNOCHA, 2006). This has been operationalized at global, regional and country levels and has involved the development of a common approach to food security needs assessment and response in CAP countries.

Key innovations in this approach have included an extension and improvement of the scope of food security needs assessment, including: (i) improved situation analysis; (ii) response options analysis; and (iii) monitoring and evaluation. In particular, the attempt to include a component on response options analysis is a novel development and reflects the need to

FIGURE 11
Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification Reference Table

PHASE CLASSIFICATION		KEY REFERENCE OUTCOMES (Current or imminent outcomes on lives and livelihoods; based on convergence of evidence)	
1	GENERALLY FOOD SECURE	**Crude mortality rate**	<0.5/10 000/day
		Acute malnutrition	<3% (w/h <-2 z-scores)
		Stunting	<20% (h/age <-2 z-scores)
		Food access/availability	Usually adequate (>2 100 kcal ppp day[1]), stable
		Dietary diversity	Consistent quality and quantity of diversity
		Water access/availability	Usually adequate (> 15 litres ppp day), stable
		Hazards	Moderate to low probability and vulnerability
		Civil security	Prevailing and structural peace
		Livelihood assets	Generally sustainable utilization (of 5 capitals)
2	CHRONICALLY FOOD INSECURE	**Crude mortality rate**	<0.5/10 000/day; U5MR[2]<1/10 000/day
		Acute malnutrition	>3% but <10% (w/h <-2 z-score), usual range, stable
		Stunting	>20% (h/age <-2 z-scores)
		Food access/availability	Borderline adequate (2 100 kcal ppp day); unstable
		Dietary diversity	Chronic dietary diversity deficit
		Water access/availability	Borderline adequate (15 litres ppp day); unstable
		Hazards	Recurrent, with high livelihood vulnerability
		Civil security	Unstable; disruptive tension
		Coping	"Insurance strategies"
		Livelihood assets	Stressed and unsustainable utilization (of 5 capitals)
		Structural	Pronounced underlying hindrances to food security
3	ACUTE FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD CRISIS	**Crude mortality rate**	0.5-1/10 000/day, U5MR 1–2/10 000/day
		Acute malnutrition	10-15% (w/h <-2 z-score), >than usual, increasing
		Disease	Epidemic; increasing
		Food access/availability	Lack of entitlement; 2 100 kcal ppp day via asset stripping
		Dietary diversity	Acute dietary diversity deficit
		Water access/availability	7.5–15 litres ppp day, accessed via asset stripping
		Destitution/displacement	Emerging; diffuse
		Civil security	Limited spread, low-intensity conflict
		Coping	"Crisis strategies"; CSI[3] > than reference; increasing
		Livelihood assets	Accelerated and critical depletion or loss of access
4	HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY	**Crude mortality rate**	1–2 /10 000/day, >2x reference rate, increasing; U5MR >2/10 000/day
		Acute malnutrition	>15% (w/h <-2 z-score), >than usual, increasing
		Disease	Pandemic
		Food access/availability	Severe entitlement gap; unable to meet 2 100 kcal ppp day
		Dietary diversity	Regularly 2–3 or fewer main food groups consumed
		Water access/availability	<7.5 litres ppp day (human usage only)
		Destitution/displacement	Concentrated; increasing
		Civil security	Widespread, high-intensity conflict
		Coping	"Distress strategies"; CSI significantly > than reference
		Livelihood assets	Near complete & irreversible depletion or loss of access
5	FAMINE/ HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE	**Crude mortality rate**	>2/10 000/day (example: 6 000 /1 000 000/30 days)
		Acute malnutrition	>30% (w/h <-2 z-score)
		Disease	Pandemic
		Food access/availability	Extreme entitlement gap; much below 2 100 kcal ppp day
		Water access/availability	<4 litres ppp day (human usage only)
		Destitution/displacement	Large-scale, concentrated
		Civil security	Widespread, high-intensity conflict
		Livelihood assets	Effectively complete loss; collapse

STRATEGIC RESPONSE FRAMEWORK
(Mitigate immediate outcomes, support livelihoods and address underlying/structural causes)

- Strategic assistance to pockets of food insecure groups
- Investment in food and economic production systems
- Enable development of livelihood systems based on principles of sustainability, justice, and equity
- Prevent emergence of structural hindrances to food security
- Advocacy

- Design & implement strategies to increase stability, resistance and resilience of livelihood systems, thus reducing risk
- Provision of "safety nets" to high-risk groups
- Interventions for optimal and sustainable use of livelihood assets
- Create contingency plan
- Redress structural hindrances to food security
- Close monitoring of relevant outcome and process indicators
- Advocacy

- Support livelihoods and protect vulnerable groups
- Strategic and complementary interventions to immediately raise food access/availability AND support livelihoods
- Selected provision of complementary sectoral support (e.g., water, shelter, sanitation, health, etc.)
- Strategic interventions at community to national levels to create, stabilize, rehabilitate or protect priority livelihood assets
- Create or implement contingency plan
- Close monitoring of relevant outcome and process indicators
- Use "crisis as opportunity" to redress underlying structural causes
- Advocacy

- Urgent protection of vulnerable groups
- Urgently raise food access through complementary interventions
- Selected provision of complementary sectoral support (e.g., water, shelter, sanitation, health, etc.)
- Protection against complete livelihood asset loss and/oradvocacy for access
- Close monitoring of relevant outcome and process indicators
- Use "crisis as opportunity" to redress underlying structural causes
- Advocacy

- Critically urgent protection of human lives and vulnerable groups
- Comprehensive assistance with basic needs (e.g. food, water, shelter, sanitation, health, etc.)
- Immediate policy/legal revisions where necessary
- Negotiations with varied political-economic interests
- Use "crisis as opportunity" to redress underlying structural causes
- Advocacy

link assessment and programming more thoroughly.

UN agencies are also increasingly working together to conduct joint assessments, with the goal of identifying the "basket" of interrelated sectoral needs in crisis response. For example, since 2003, FAO and WFP have jointly taken steps to improve the process and methodology of Crop and Food Supply Assessments (CFSAMs) to include a joint critical review, technical discussions, consultancies and workshops with interested partners. Since early 2004, CFSAMS have routinely included "observers" from donor agencies to increase the transparency and understanding of the process. There are possible drawbacks to such modes of collaboration, in that "all-in-one" assessment approaches may dilute methodological rigour and sectoral analysis. Therefore, assessments should bear in mind the need for close coordination, but with distinct sectoral analysis to ensure the technical integrity of sectors as well as maximum coordination (Haan, Majid and Darcy, 2006; Darcy and Hofmann, 2003).

Strengthening institutional capacity and leadership

Institutional capacity and leadership needs to be supported to promote food security priorities in strategic response. At the international, national and regional levels, this means focusing on ensuring that the wider dimensions of food security are incorporated into policy and programming activities.

International level

Over the past few years, there has been growing concern regarding the capacity of the international community to meet the basic needs of affected populations in a timely and predictable manner during crisis (UNOCHA, 2005). From the food security perspective, the debate has pointed to serious shortfalls in humanitarian coordination and capacity. The integration of food security, nutrition and livelihoods within the humanitarian sector reveals an unclear mix of priorities, as well as of capacities. Allied to this is the reality that UN and international agencies exhibit a low level of preparedness in terms of human resource and sectoral capacities.

FIGURE 11 *(cont.)*
Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification Reference Table

EARLY WARNING LEVELS	PROBABILITY LIKELIHOOD (of worsening phase)	SEVERITY (of worsening phase)	REFERENCE HAZARDS AND VULNERABILITIES	IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION
ALERT	As yet unclear	Not applicable	**Hazard:** occurrence of, or predicted event stressing livelihoods; with low or uncertain vulnerability **Process indicators:** small negative change from normal	Close monitoring and analysis
MODERATE RISK	Elevated probability/likelihood	Specified by predicted phase class, and as indicated by colour of diagonal lines on map.	**Hazard:** occurrence of, or predicted event stressing livelihoods; with moderate vulnerability **Process indicators:** large negative change from normal	Close monitoring and analysis Contingency planning Step-up current phase interventions
HIGH RISK	High probability; "more likely than not"		**Hazard:** occurrence of, or strongly predicted major event stressing livelihoods; with high vulnerability **Process indicators:** large and compounding negative changes	Preventative interventions–with increased urgency for high risk populations Advocacy

[1] Per person per day.
[2] Under-five mortality rate.
[3] Coping strategy index.

Source: FAO/FSAU, 2006.

As outlined in Box 17, the ongoing UN humanitarian reform process is designed to address some of these challenges by improving the predictability, accountability and effectiveness of crisis response. The main dimensions of the reform process aim to strengthen response capacity, coordination and funding mechanisms. A range of complementary initiatives are in progress, focused on benchmarking standards, definitions and common funding at the country level (ODI, 2005a).

The emerging architecture for humanitarian reform focuses heavily on managerial and technical aspects, priorities that have been strongly promoted by donors through the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) approach. Although still in an embryonic stage, a number of early lessons can be identified relating to food security and protracted crisis. In terms of improving effectiveness, systematic capacity gaps have been identified through the cluster approach. This includes nine sectors with delegated leaders covering: water sanitation and nutrition (UNICEF); shelter in natural disasters (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC]); shelter and camp management in conflict and protection (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]); health (WHO); logistics (WFP); and early recovery (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]).

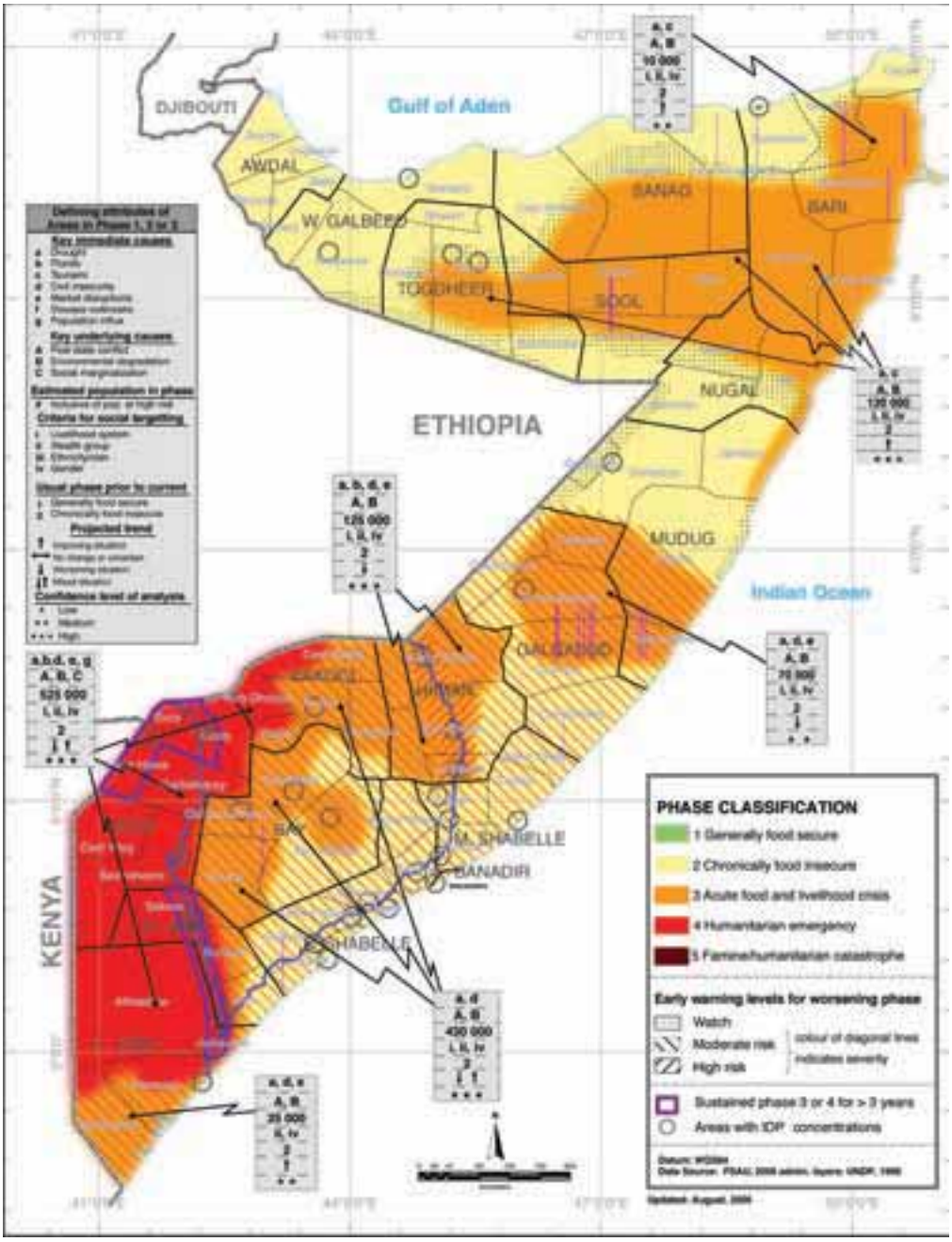
Experiences from the earthquake response in Pakistan raise questions as to whether or not the clusters have exacerbated interagency competition, and the degree to which further involvement from non-UN and local actors is deepened (ODI, 2005a; ActionAid, 2006b). The incorporation of livelihoods and exit strategies – critical in the area of food security – remains less clear.

Regarding the predictability of financing, the CERF approach is recognized as a positive development in improving global humanitarian response, particularly given its emphasis on expanding rapid-response mechanisms and focusing on neglected crises (ODI, 2005a; Oxfam, 2005). However, a number of outstanding questions remain about the financial implications of CERF, given that it represents a small fraction of the funding available for humanitarian response and may not address further underlying problems related to the accuracy of analysis and capacity constraints.

National and regional levels

At the national and regional levels, greater efforts can be employed to support policy and programming frameworks so that food security objectives are incorporated into national poverty reduction strategies.

FIGURE 12
Somalia situation analysis, post-Deyr 2005/06 projection, January 2006



Note: Estimated populations do not include internally displaced person (IDP) or urban estimates and are rounded to the nearest 10 000.
For category explanations see http://www.fsausomali.org.
The regional and district boundaries reflect those endorsed by the Government of the Republic of Somalia in 1986.

Source: FAO/FSAU, 2006.

BOX 17
UN humanitarian reform, 2005

In 2005, Member States endorsed a set of improvements to the humanitarian system designed to enhance the predictability, accountability and effectiveness of humanitarian response. Based on the guidance of the Emergency Relief Coordinator together with humanitarian partners, the initiatives resulted in a Humanitarian Response Review, which recommended the following:

1. **Strengthening humanitarian response capacity** through the cluster approach. Each cluster has a designated lead, working in an area of humanitarian response in which gaps in response have been identified. Clusters are organized at both the field and global levels.
2. **Strengthening the humanitarian coordination system**. This requires engaging the broader humanitarian community, strengthening the capacity and knowledge base of humanitarian coordinators and improving the overall coordinator system.
3. **Ensuring predictable funding through the Central Emergency Response Fund** (CERF). The goal of the fund is to provide aid workers with sufficient funding within 72 hours to jump-start lifesaving relief operations when the most lives are on the line. The CERF grant facility will be funded from additional voluntary contributions with a target of $500 million.

Source: UNOCHA, 2005.

Since 2005, both FAO and the EC have been working to support such strategies through the EC FAO Information for Action Programme, which is currently focused on 20 countries in chronic, transitory and transition contexts.

The programme entry point is to support policy and programming frameworks to move beyond a classical approach to information generation and analysis, which tends to be sectoral and poorly linked to decision-making processes, and to ensure the generation of programming and policy outputs relevant to diverse contexts. This typically takes place against a backdrop of absent or weak state institutions and the prevalence of repeatedly mobilized short-term interventions.

For example, in southern and northern Sudan there has been significant progress in formulating the Sudan Institutional Capacity Programme: Food Security Information for Action (SIFSIA). The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen "*human, physical and organisation capacities ... in the generation and utilisation of information for the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of food security related policies and programmes*" (FAO (2005e). This should be attained through the following objectives: (i) the overall policy framework for food security is to be defined and made operational; (ii) an institutional set-up for food security is to be established to enhance coordination and strengthen vertical and horizontal linkages; (iii) effective policies and programmes should be designed, monitored and evaluated to address key priority areas; and (iv) relevant food security information should be easily accessible and usable by all relevant stakeholders.

To date, the ongoing work of the programme points to a number of lessons that have wider application in strengthening institutions. First, the alignment of support to the highest decision-making bodies is critical, because the credibility of future interventions will often depend on the institutional location of such support. For example, for both northern and southern Sudan it is recommended to create two Food Security Councils under the Office of the President to ensure that food security is effectively prioritized. However, as in

many other contexts, the implications of decentralization remain challenging.

Additionally, the linkage between information and decision-making processes should be established as an early priority and information gaps should be addressed. For example, in northern Sudan, key gaps and shortcomings include out of date census and baseline data, lack of information standardization, duplication, limited information access and poor linkages between chronic and transitory contexts. This is a critical area of concern, and has also been the subject of a joint assessment between the African Union (AU), the EU and FAO on the effectiveness of early warning systems in Africa (FAO, 2006h).

Conclusions

The link between acute and chronic food insecurity raises challenges for donors and international agencies to decide the relative severity of different crises and the appropriateness of alternative response options. Although agencies are working to innovate in their programming approach, the weakness of existing analytical tools and the absence of common terms, definitions and frameworks for analysing food security remain. Therefore, programming tends to be guided by one-off needs assessments, driven by resource-led interventions. A policy bias exists towards addressing the acute symptoms of crisis, rather than the underlying causes of a dynamic situation. This is also compounded by inconsistent and unpredictable humanitarian funding.

More effective strategies are required to evaluate the appropriateness of food security strategies and to determine where food aid is required and where it is not. The following policy priorities have been identified to ensure food security response strategies that link immediate food security interventions to medium- and longer-term priorities:

- Improving food security analysis to ensure that responses are needs-based, strategic and timely;
- incorporating needs assessment as part of a process linked to monitoring and evaluation, rather than a one-off event driven by resource requirements;
- strengthening institutional capacity and leadership at the international, national and regional levels to ensure that the wider dimensions of food security are considered in policy and programming exercises.