

4. Sustainability

- Given the potentially huge change in the funding and operating environment apparently imminent in Sudan, this review was conducted with an eye towards how the DFIS may become more sustainably run within government. In reality, while the principle of a 'handover' to government at some stage is recognized by SC and its staff, the uncertainties at the Darfur level (conflict, political tension, displacement etc) as well as at the national level (fact and nature of peace agreement), limit the ability to envisage, let alone plan for such a handing over.
- However, in this regard the DFIS is considered by many, from within and outside of Government, to be an excellent model of State level collaboration and planning around a sound information base. The FAO, who are conducting a review and planning exercise on behalf of the EC, for future information system/s in Sudan, see the DFIS as one of the most positive and impressive examples to draw upon. During the period of this review, a small presentation and seminar was conducted in Khartoum of the DFIS, on request of the Food Security Director within the MoANR. A representative from the EC also attended this seminar.
- In reality, the DFIS has played a major and long-term role in the transfer of skills to the government, through the regular activities of the project. However, it must also be mentioned that many of the staff that have joined the project (and many other UN and INGO projects) moved over from government positions, particularly from the APU of the MoAg.

5. Value of DFIS in North and West Darfur

- The project gives an early warning of approaching food crises, thereby providing the opportunity for timely intervention.
- The project provides a reliable estimate of food needs in North and West Darfur, and for IDPs in South Darfur. While the GoS/WFP Annual Needs Assessment was conducted separately to the Village and Household Survey in 2003, the results of the survey were influential in the final figures developed by WFP.
- The estimate takes into account the degree to which households themselves can make up the food deficit.
- The project ensures a degree of disaster preparedness by having information at hand for targeting, survey teams ready for rapid appraisal, and institutional systems established for coordinating a response.
- The project has developed an important information and experience base on Darfur, although as mentioned this still needs to be fully documented and organised.
- The project has built up a cadre of Sudanese SC/UK staff, as well as staff in partner agencies, who are trained in all aspects of survey work. These skills can be applied not just in relief planning but also planning other food security interventions.

2 Overview of the Recommendations

This mid-term review was carried out in the expectation that a consultant would be hired for an extended period of time to follow-up on the following recommendations – ToR in Annex II

1. Impact Monitoring and Evaluation

- The DFIS must incorporate in to its regular activities an assessment of its food needs predictions and any resultant food aid deliveries that took place. The 1999 food aid impact assessment exercise provides an existing and familiar model that could be replicated. This need only be done in one or two food economy zones per year.

- The DFIS needs to conduct a proper review of its targeting activities. Project documents suggest there are positive **and negative** implications of the efforts to raise awareness amongst communities of its methodology and criteria for calculating food needs and targeting food aid.

2. Database and Documentation Consolidation

- Database consolidation is urgently required. All data should be consolidated in to excel and word documents and Epiinfo where possible, and backed up in El Fasher and Khartoum . Hard copies of key trend data and reports should also be filed in El Fasher and Khartoum. Once completed basic training in excel and word and data management should be conducted, so all project staff are clear on how it is organized and accessed.
- All food economy baselines should be developed in a standard format – including narrative and quantitative aspects. The food economy profiles, of which one has already been drafted, provide such a format. This will involve extracting information from computers and reports as well as from the local knowledge of staff members. This could also be developed in to a food economies of Darfur booklet, as recommended in the 2000 evaluation.
 - Even where local livelihoods have been seriously disrupted due to the recent conflict, a record of the old food economy description is still important to document, as a reference and potential project planning tool.
- A briefing note highlighting and clarifying many of the common issues, (mis)perceptions and misunderstanding, around early warning and food needs identification, would be very useful for internal and external managers and donors. Most of the relevant material is available in existing project documentation⁴.
- Sites must be identified and prioritized for the updating of existing baselines and conducting impact assessments. Some areas have been relatively little affected by the recent conflict and may be suitable for conducting impact assessment studies, whether of food needs and food aid, or of project interventions. Sites for baseline updating should be prioritized according to the magnitude of livelihood change over recent years i.e. the greater the change expected due, for example, to continuous bad years, the greater the urgency for updating.
- Some nutrition baselines need re-doing where they were conducted using small samples. Nutrition baselines are also needed for some FEZs that do not have them. Clarification of when nutrition baselines are conducted by RC or by FEZ is required.

3. Integration of Analysis

- The DFIS project must establish a systematic process for improving the integration of analysis, linking food security, health and nutrition. This will provide the basis for the team developing a broader 'livelihoods based' analysis of communities in the State/s. All staff would benefit from such analysis, learning about each other's sectors and ultimately moving towards a deeper causal analysis of malnutrition, as well an improved understanding around access to health and education, and infringements of child rights.
- Two simple suggestions include:
 - Joint analysis of every nutrition survey (food security and nutrition staff) - this can be done using the forthcoming emergency nutrition assessment manual (to be published July 2004)
 - Use of the Livelihoods matrix⁵ for developing a broader understanding of the livelihood context for the State.

⁴ *Ships Passing in the Night*, Seaman, 1999; *DFIS Evaluation*, 2000; *Evaluation of SC's Response to the Drought in North Darfur*, Tanner, 2001; *How bad does it have to get*, Collins, 2001.

⁵ A simple format for looking at different sectoral and thematic characteristics by food economy/livelihood group

- i. Presentation and discussion of the food economy baselines and livelihoods matrix, once initially drafted should be undertaken with other partner agencies in the State

Exposure to wider analysis ...

- As part of learning from others, efforts are being made to explore possible exchanges or joint technical workshops with the Ethiopia programme (where SC operates a similar system to the DFIS, in the Somali region). This will also be looked in to regarding nutrition exchanges.

4. Flexibility in Data Collection and Assessment

- The changed operating environment in Darfur means the team must explore all possible sources of information, where and when access to the field is limited. For example, private traders and other people coming in or passing through El Fasher must be tapped for information and reliable networks established and maintained.
- The team must have the capacity for conducting several simultaneous assessments when and where access becomes possible. Mobilising Khartoum based staff with HEA skills must be part of that strategy.

5. National Level co-ordination and Linkage

- As described above the DFIS has had limited success in improving national level co-ordination. In the event of a peace agreement being signed (and in anticipation of it) the activities around food security information systems and interventions are likely to increase. Already the GoS Food Security Department and the FAO have shown great interest in SC's experience of community grain banks and information systems. SC is certainly well placed to influence the thinking and design of future such projects. However, to do this articulately and effectively, within a more 'competitive' environment, the food security capacity at Khartoum level will need to be strengthened and different options considered:
 - The recruitment of an international level food security adviser
 - Secondment or placement of an SC adviser within government or the UN (FAO or WFP)
- In addition to the above, liaison and co-ordination with SC southern Sudan, the Food Security Adviser (to be appointed) there, and the FSAG (Food Security Analysis Group) for the south will become increasingly necessary. SC Sudan (north and south) could usefully explore links in this respect.

6. Management – Technical links

- There is the suggestion from different quarters that management – technical links do not always work as clearly and efficiently as they could. To a large extent the success of the technical advisers depends on their own proactiveness, the quality of their advice and the relations they have established with the programme and project staff and managers they work with. Difficulties can develop where:
 - The advice and guidance of the adviser is not clear
 - The advice and guidance of the adviser is not agreed with by management
 - Management itself is not clear on what strategy or next steps need to be followed

If any of the above occur and they are not openly and quickly addressed and explained, decision-making can become delayed (or appear to be delayed) and plans not developed and put in to action.

It is important therefore that management is open and clear about the decision-making process, in order that feedback and discussion takes place and delays in implementing and following up on decisions do not take place.

7. Future funding options for the DFIS

Discussions took place with the EC and USAID about funding options, given that funding finishes at the end of 2004:

- USAID would be interested to look at a concept note for the DFIS, if it was based around meeting the information needs of the current emergency in Darfur.
- The DFIS is currently funded from the B7 2010 budget line, based on the EC Country Technical Paper.
- After 2004, a maximum of 2.5m Euros is available, in tranches of 400,000, under the call-for-proposals. 1m euro is allocated for Darfur.
- There will be 20m euro under the EC food security information systems budget line, for which FAO has been contracted to design the proposal. This money will not be available until at least well in to 2005.

One of the underlying themes of the EU's strategy for a post-peace Sudan is 'relief to development'. In this respect a new proposal for the DFIS could be developed where it met the information needs of all actors, from the relief to the development spectrums, based on a livelihoods analysis. This would fit naturally in to a further evolution of the DFIS, and has been suggested in past evaluations. Preliminary discussions were undertaken, particularly with Oxfam, in El Fasher, Khartoum and London, about if and how the DFIS could play such a role. As a joint or consortium based proposal this would be worth exploring.