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The Global Food Price Crisis: Lessons and Ideas for Relief Planners and Managers

The first half of 2008 was marked by significant rises in commodity prices, with food price increases averaging 52 percent between 2007 and 2008. While the response to the wider situation is largely outside the scope of humanitarian programmes, those managing relief and recovery efforts have faced a number of challenges. This paper lays out the background to the food price rises, outlines a number of key challenges for those planning and managing relief efforts, and suggests ideas, tools and approaches that could prove of value.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to assist those working in agencies undertaking operational relief and recovery work in the context of high food prices. It distils ideas and lessons from research and learning initiatives concerned with responses to high food prices as well as evaluations and synthesis reports contained in the ALNAP Evaluative Reports Database (ERD). It also draws on ideas and lessons from aid delivery in other rapidly changing contexts, as well as from latest research on operational delivery.

The response to the food-price crisis requires actions both to improve the quality of responses to food crises in general and also to address issues specific to rises in food prices. This paper focuses mainly on the latter, while recognizing that any response to higher prices will require general improvements in programming quality as well as specific efforts.

This paper complements and can be usefully read alongside a paper on slow-onset disasters produced by ALNAP and ProVention in 2007. That paper summarises lessons on key topics including needs assessments, participation, targeting and exit strategies, and can be found at http://www.alnap.org/publications/pdfs/ALNAP-ProVention_lessons_on_slow-onset_disasters.pdf.

The Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)¹ – developed by the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis and published in July 2008 – is essential reading for understanding the wider contexts of high food prices and the actions agreed by the leaders of major international institutions. Important guiding principles on food and livelihood insecurity and emergencies can be found in the Sphere Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*.² There are a wide range of other useful resources which are cited throughout the paper.

Section 1 of this paper outlines the background and context of the recent food-price crises. Section 2 then lays out nine ideas and lessons in two broad categories: analysis and planning; and implementation. The nine points include lessons from available research and experience, as well as some new suggestions of as-yet untried approaches. The Appendix at the end of the paper includes a series of Annexes that provide more detailed information and illustrations related to ideas and concepts outlined in Sections 1 and 2.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

What is the ‘food-price crisis’ and what makes it distinctive?

A sharp increase in food prices over the past couple of years, intensifying in early 2008, has raised serious concerns about food and nutrition for many poor people in developing countries. The key affected areas are Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central America (IFPRI/CGIAR, 2008). There are also related concerns about inflation, and – in some countries – about civil unrest.

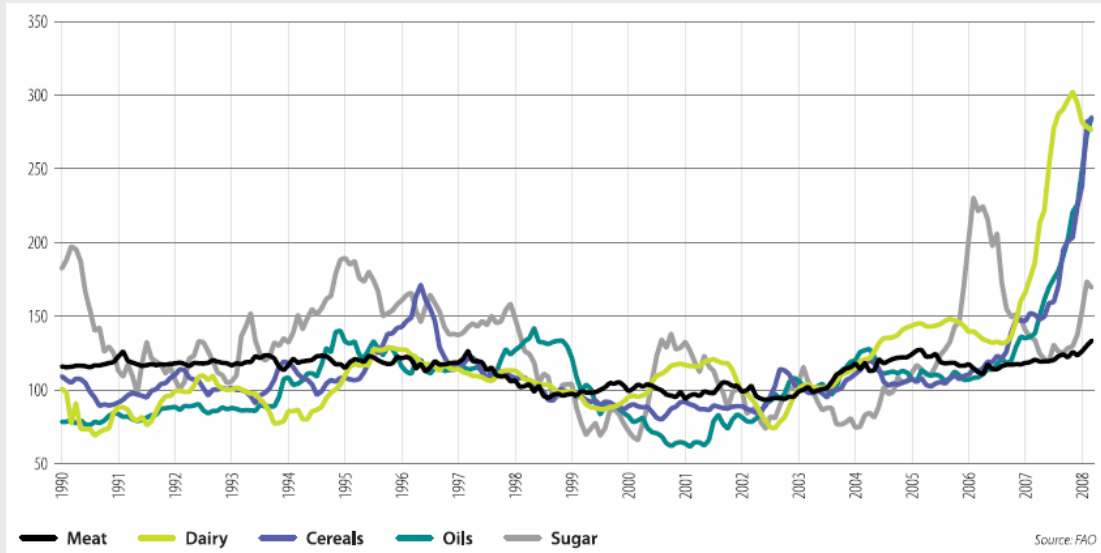
The current situation is distinctive because it is not just a select few but nearly all major food and feed commodities that are seeing a ‘concurrence of the hike in world prices’ (FAO, 2008). Real prices are higher than they have been since the 1974 price spike. Box 1 illustrates the changes in the past two decades and highlights some price increases of specific commodities. When

¹ [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-7GSPD6-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-7GSPD6-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf)

² www.sphereproject.org

adjusted for inflation and the recent decline of the dollar, the food-price increases are smaller but still dramatic, carrying serious consequences for the purchasing power of the poor (FAO, 2008).

Box 1: Monthly FAO price indices for basic food commodity groups (1998–2000=100), and examples of specific food-price rises



Examples of specific commodity price rises

- Since 2000, wheat price in the international market has more than tripled and maize prices have more than doubled.
- Since the start of 2006, the average world price for rice has risen by 217 per cent, wheat by 136 per cent, maize by 125 per cent and soybeans by 107 per cent.
- Dairy products, meat, poultry, palm oil, and cassava have also experienced price hikes.
- The Economic Intelligence Unit predicts an 11 per cent rise in cereal prices in the next two years and a 5 per cent increase in the price of oilseeds.

Sources: FEG Consulting (2008); Maxwell et al (2008).

Why is the food-price crisis happening?

There is an emerging and reasonable consensus among experts and academics about the range of causes. However, debate is ongoing about the relative contribution of these causes. There is certainly no one, single cause; rather, many factors are interacting in different, locally specific ways. Causes vary between different places and over time, as has happened in previous commodity booms. Some are cyclical, some are structural and some are unique (IFPRI/CGIAR, 2008).

Key causal factors of recent rises in food prices³

- ◆ **Weather disruptions**, including serious droughts, have affected output in several key producing countries (Australia, Turkey, Ukraine and parts of North America) in the mid-2000s. This has led to two successive years of negative growth in world cereal production.
- ◆ **World production of cereals has slowed, causing a decline in stocks** over the last decade. This has weakened the ability of the world food system to cope with shocks and created conditions in which short-term shocks cause large price increases (Wiggins, 2008).

³ This list was collated from IFPRI, 2008a; Maxwell et al, 2008; Oxfam International April 2008; FEG Consulting 2008; Wiggins, 2008.

- ◆ **High cost of oil and energy** is affecting transportation of agricultural inputs and outputs, mechanical cultivation, fertilisers and pesticides.
- ◆ **Increased demand due to use of food crops in biofuel production** has resulted in reduced soybean and wheat cultivation.
- ◆ **Increasing and changing demand in China and India**, due to economic growth, has led to increased consumer purchasing power and consequent shifts away from traditional staples and toward higher-value foods like meat and milk. However, some analysts believe that the effect of this on world prices has been exaggerated.
- ◆ **Debated policy choices:** for example, reactive export bans in some developing countries, and biofuel subsidies in Western countries (FEG Consulting, 2008).
- ◆ **Topsoil erosion:** modern ploughing, overgrazing, fertiliser and pesticide use result in the steady depletion of worldwide topsoil. Water and winds carry away the soil, when it is not fixed by plant cover. An estimated 25 billion tons of topsoil are lost to erosion each year. The UN estimates that erosion has now seriously degraded about 40 per cent of the world's agricultural land.
- ◆ **Speculative capital:** speculation in international commodities markets may have contributed to upward pressure on food prices. Big institutional investors have moved billions of dollars into commodities markets like oil, metals and foods in response to the stock-market decline and the slide in real-estate values. Food-processing companies, governments, big farmers and even aid agencies have entered the markets to hedge their future costs, leading to increased activity in futures markets. This clearly affects market sentiment, and some analysts see this as a significant contributor to price rises, but the point remains debated.
- ◆ **Under-investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural innovation.**
- ◆ **Increasing urbanisation** often means that more people are becoming purchasers rather than producers of food.

How long will the price crisis continue?

The short answer here is that experts do not agree. On one hand, it has been argued that by 2030 there will be 600 million more chronically under-nourished people in the world due to continued pressure on prices, in part due to the conversion of maize away from food uses to ethanol production (Runge and Senauer, 2007). Demand for agricultural commodities – food, feed, and fuel – is likely to continue to escalate. Climate change and rising energy demand could re-accelerate food prices in the future. Ad-hoc market and trade policies such as export bans and import subsidies add further volatility in the international food market (IFPRI/CGIAR, 2008).

On the other hand, price spikes are not rare in agricultural markets, and high prices are historically short-lived. For example, the International Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute estimates that higher maize demand and prices will last until 2009/10, and thereafter expects production growth to be on par with consumption growth (FAPRI, 2007). Trends since the 1960s broadly support this view, with data showing more food produced in absolute terms and declining real prices for that food. There have been previous spikes – notably around 1974 and 1996 – but technological change in agriculture, poverty reduction, higher labour productivity, and increased demand for food linked to urbanisation and economic growth, have combined to maintain downward pressure on food costs to consumers at the average global level (Hazell and Wood, 2008).

Most analysts suggest that, provided there is not a huge decline in oil prices, within 15 months most of the price spike will disappear, with the possible exception of maize prices where the impact of US ethanol production may still weigh heavy. In the medium term, staple food prices

are expected to be 20 to 40 per cent higher in ten years than they were in 2002 in real terms, owing largely to increased real costs of oil and biofuel production.

At time of publication of this paper, evidence indicated that the food price rises had started to slow, with FAO data showing that for many food commodities, export prices peaked around June and have been declining since. While price falls have intensified in the past two months, the prices of most food commodities are still higher than a year ago.

What are the impacts of rising food prices on poor people?

Higher food prices can have radically different effects across countries and population groups. A recent IFPRI report (IFPRI, 2008b) provides a conceptual framework for understanding these impacts, which powerfully highlights the complexity of cause and effect (see Annex 1). This paper provides perhaps the most detailed guide available to analysing the impact of food price rises. Broadly speaking, at the country level, net food exporters will benefit from improved terms of trade, although the benefits may be offset in situations where exports are being banned to protect consumers. Net food-importing nations, however, will struggle to meet domestic food demand.

An FAO report published in June 2008 highlights twenty two developing countries that are especially vulnerable due to a combination of high levels of chronic hunger (more than 30 per cent under-nourishment), and high dependence on imports of petroleum products (100 per cent in most countries) and, in many cases, also of major grains (rice, wheat and maize) for domestic consumption (FAO, 2008). Annex 2 lists these countries, and values of the three indicators for each country.

Food-price increases are having serious consequences for the purchasing power of the poor (KFSSG/FAO, 2008). Affected groups include the rural landless, pastoralists, small-scale farmers and the urban poor. Despite the various causes of food crises, the hardships that individuals and communities face have striking similarities across disparate groups and settings. These include:

- inability to afford food, and related lack of adequate caloric intake
- distress sales of productive assets
- migration of household members in search of work
- reduced household spending on healthcare, education and other necessities.

All of the above carry potentially irreversible consequences and compromise the future ability of individuals and households to escape poverty. For example, malnutrition that leads to stunting in preschool children directly affects their ability to learn in school and thus their long-term ability to earn income as adults (IFPRI/CGIAR, 2008a). The effects on poor people will tend to vary by livelihood group. A July 2008 workshop in Nairobi analysed vulnerability and impact on agriculturalists, agro-pastoralists, pastoralists and the urban poor – this is presented in Annex 3. By way of illustration, the work of the Kenya Food Security Steering Group identified the following implications of rising prices in Kenya:

- the population living below the food poverty line has risen sharply since July of 2007 to June 2008. Most of these poor populations would still remain food insecure if they were to divert one quarter of their expenditure on non food items to food expenditure.
- Poor populations with no alternative sources of income are resorting to diet changes and reduction in frequency and composition of meals.
- As many live in water scarce areas and the majority purchase water, the rise in malnutrition and susceptibility to disease are likely to occur beyond emergency levels.
- Informal wage rates are declining as a result of increased demand for casual jobs. The wages are already being eroded by the pace of inflation

- In urban slums and in pastoral and agro pastoral livelihoods, the rise in school drop outs as a coping strategy is also contributing to the increase in social problems.
- The risk for recurrence of civil instability, food riots and heightened crime is increasing.
- In most affected districts, vulnerable pastoral households are resorting to distress livestock sales to cover food gap and it is likely that vulnerable populations will increasingly depend on medium to well-off households while destitution may also increase.
- Subsistence harvests among small scale farmers in agro pastoral and marginal agricultural livelihoods limits benefits accruing from the rise in food prices.
- Increased conflicts in the northwest have minimized migration options for pastoralists as well as barring access to scarce water resources and better grazing around the rivers and swamps.
- If prevailing price trends and compounding factors are not addressed, there is a high risk that populations in the urban slums, pastoral, agro pastoral and marginal agricultural farmers, may fall into acute livelihood crisis toward the end of the year (KFSSG, 2008)

Some analysts have suggested that in some contexts food-price rises could be a positive thing for the rural poor, many of whom who earn their living by growing and selling food. Poor households that are net sellers of food, it is argued, stand to benefit from higher prices, which offer the possibility of improved livelihoods, with positive impacts on farm households, as well as on the landless poor through increased job opportunities and disposable incomes (IFPRI, 2008a).

However, the reality is not as straightforward. The costs of production, and particularly of fertiliser, are going up even faster than food prices. The value of a kilogram of fertiliser doubled relative to a kilogram of sorghum or millet grain over the past eight years in Niger, and the trend strongly accelerated over the past six months, far outpacing gains in food prices (ICRISAT, 2008). Subsistence farmers will be hard pressed to maintain subsistence levels if they can no longer afford to purchase fertiliser.

In the short term, net producers may need increased credit to respond to high fertiliser prices, enabling them to recoup their costs through the higher price of their outputs.⁴ Without such credit, however, it is unlikely that many poor farmers will be able to gain from higher food prices, given the rising cost of seeds, fertiliser and pesticides, as well as costs of running machinery and irrigation. Controls on prices and exports of food imposed by some governments means that it may not be financially viable for farmers to produce more crops for sale as prices are kept lower nationally, and they are unable to sell for higher prices on the international market.

Without serious effort, benefits from price increases will not reach beyond large-scale commercial operations and agribusinesses to small-scale producers in remote markets. The current situation is arguably a spur for greater investment in agriculture and other policies to reduce rural poverty (Oxfam, 2008). If this does happen, higher prices for agricultural products carry significant potential to yield medium-to-long term benefits for the rural poor (RHVP/Wahenga brief, 2008). A recent OXFAM Briefing Paper entitled "Double-edged prices" summarises succinctly the reasons why poor farmers and rural workers are unable to reap the benefits of higher commodity prices, and outlines ten key actions that should be taken by developing country governments (see Annex 4). The IFPRI paper mentioned earlier (IFPRI, 2008b) is also specifically aimed to support national decision-makers in acquiring information and applying methods for understanding the likely effects of a global food crisis on their country and acting to alleviate the risks and exploit the opportunities brought about by such crises.

⁴ Harold Alderman of the World Bank, speaking at an IFPRI/IFAD/World Bank Seminar on 'Helping Women Respond to the Global Food Crisis'. Available online at <http://www.ifpri.org/events/seminars/2008/20080617women.asp>

What is being done and by whom?

Specific policies are needed to deal with the changing causes and consequences of high food prices, to help the most vulnerable people in the short term, while working to stabilise food prices by increasing agricultural production in the long term. A detailed set of policy prescriptions has been laid out in the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), developed by the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis. The CFA highlights two major objectives – meeting immediate needs, and building longer-term resilience – with related outcomes and actions. These are detailed in Annex 5.

A number of stakeholders have already begun to address the consequences of the crisis. Actions include reallocation of resources in existing programmes, mobilisation of new funds to ensure delivery of food assistance, nutritional care and support, supporting social safety nets for the most vulnerable, and supply of seeds, fertilisers and other basic inputs to smallholders. Given the global and dispersed nature of the response, no summary could be comprehensive, but Annex 6 gives an indication and illustrative examples of the range of actions being taken by different organisations.

In addition, major pledges of support for agriculture have been made by the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and the Islamic Development Bank, as well as bilateral donors and NGOs. There have also been a number of high-level summit meetings to discuss the food-prices rise and agree actions. Three of these are especially important – the meeting to establish the CFA taskforce (of April 2008), the Rome Summit of June 2008, and the G8 meeting of July 2008. The key features of these meetings are outlined in Annex 7.

What are the implications for relief agencies?

Given all of the above, relief managers and planners are faced with a range of challenges, problems and questions. *They will need adapt and / or expand humanitarian aid programming to food-insecure people.* To date, there has been evidence of both of these actions. Improved precision in geographic and socio-economic targeting is seen as essential by many analysts, so that prioritisation in the allocation of the available resources can be made as accurate as possible. This in turn requires maximum use to be made of the livelihoods-based information currently available to a number of agencies, as well as boosting the analytical capacity of the national early warning and other systems set up to mitigate the effects of a wide range of hazards on urban and rural households' ability to survive and maintain their livelihoods (FEG Consulting, 2008).

There have also been a number of major funding appeals to facilitate programme expansion. On the financial side, WFP and USAID have both put out urgent calls for action and more money, and warned that their food aid may not be able to meet demand (Oxfam, 2008). One of the most consistently voiced short-term recommendations is to target expanded social safety nets and direct food assistance to cover the specific needs of different groups of poor people.

In specific countries, a wide mix of strategies has been employed. For example, in Kenya, work by the international UN agencies has resulted in a number of concrete priorities for action, as outlined in Box 2 overleaf.

Box 2: UN priority areas in Kenya

According to the KFSSG meeting report, FAO, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF and OCHA agreed five priority areas of activity in Kenya in response to rising food prices.

1. An integrated joint programme between WFP and FAO on Cash/Food for Work transfers where appropriate but focusing on marginalised farmers along river valleys who can improve their productivity from small-scale irrigation projects. This could also include an expansion of WFP/FAO joint programming on seeds and inputs in the Rift Valley.
2. UNICEF/WFP/WHO have agreed to consult around the issue on surveillance and management of both moderate and acute malnutrition through therapeutic and supplementary feeding with focus on urban/peri-urban poor and pastoralists.
3. FAO is to consult with partners on urban agriculture projects including with Solidarites on the expansion of their pilot project on vegetable production in slum areas. These activities are proposed for other towns such as Kisumu, Mombasa and Nakuru.
4. FAO is to consult with other stakeholders and develop a proposal on emergency response to the PPR outbreak among small ruminants in pastoral districts. Clarification is needed on whether a multi-country proposal on PPR has already been submitted.
5. Provision of assistance to pastoralists who have already been, or are close to being, forced to drop out of pastoralism.

Source: KFSSG/FAO (2008).

The next section of this paper presents ideas and lessons in response to key questions faced by operational agencies.

SECTION 2: IDEAS AND LESSONS

Through a process of consultation and analysis, a number of key questions being faced by relief planners and managers were identified. The ideas in this paper are offered in response to these questions, in two categories of 'analysis and planning' and 'implementation', as follows.

Analysis and planning

- How can we understand the impact of rising food prices on relief needs?

IDEA 1: Livelihoods analysis can help save lives and protect livelihoods

IDEA 2: Vulnerability assessment can predict impacts of food-price rises

IDEA 3: Market analysis is essential to understanding livelihood recovery

- How might we explore how these impacts could change in the future?

IDEA 4: Future scenarios can forecast the range of possible impacts

- How can we ensure that programmes remain relevant in the face of potential future impacts?

IDEA 5: Contingency planning improves operational anticipation and flexibility

Implementation

- How can we ensure that our efforts are joined-up?

IDEA 6: Coordination and partnerships between organisations are vital

- What forms of relief should be supplied and how?

IDEA 7: Short-term action is needed to boost agricultural productivity

IDEA 8: Keep reviewing and adjusting the balance between cash and food aid

IDEA 9: Social protection strategies are required to meet the needs of the poor

This section of the paper presents ideas and lessons 1 to 9, as outlined above, grouped into two sections: analysis and planning; and implementation. These nine points are intended to provide useful ideas, suggestions and pointers for relief planners and managers facing rising food prices.

IDEAS FOR ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

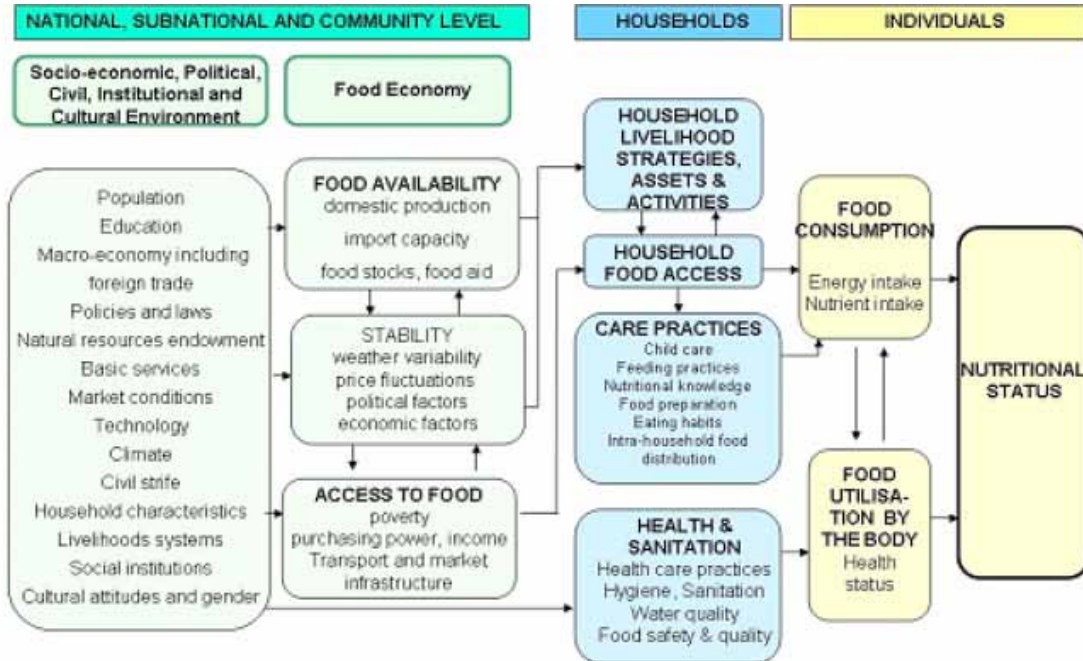
In the face of rising prices, it becomes even more vital for programmes to take account of local context through better baselines and monitoring. Humanitarian efforts are often lacking in the necessary information to predict and gauge the evolution of a food crisis, and to implement responses in a way that is sensitive to changes in the external environment (Darcy et al, 2007). More attention is needed to feedback of information from the operational level (e.g. on local distribution); building in better ‘feedback loops’ is essential to more responsive programming.

Food-price rises call for stronger analysis and monitoring of food and other basic commodity prices and markets and their impact on the needs and vulnerabilities of different livelihood groups. Such analysis is necessary to understand which type of assistance is appropriate in which context – food, seeds or cash, for example. However, analysis alone is not sufficient. It is also important to anticipate how the situation might change over time, and to build in contingency measures to ensure that a programme can be adapted in response, to undertake evidence-based advocacy and to coordinate efforts.

Ideas 1 to 3 in this first part of Section 2 provide an overview of three crucial forms of analysis in the face of high food prices: livelihoods, vulnerability and markets.

In this paper we have separated livelihoods (Idea 1), vulnerability analysis (Idea 2) and market analysis (Idea 3) to give adequate coverage to these important areas. In reality, as Table 1 indicates, good analysis of the impacts of high food prices would require all of these kinds of analysis to be integrated. The FIVIMS framework below shows how these might be ideally related under a single conceptual framework (figure 1 overleaf), which brings together wider considerations with information on livelihoods, vulnerability and markets (food economy).

Figure 1: The FIVIMS Framework, drawn from FAO (2007)



It is also essential to work towards better linkages between these forms of analysis, needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation, working towards effective information strategies that work across the project and programming cycles. Annex 8 shows how information systems would ideally work across the programming cycle.

Idea 4 highlights the value of scenarios for 'future-testing' programmes, while Idea 5 discusses contingency planning as a mechanism for enabling flexibility in the face of changing circumstances.

1: Good livelihoods analysis can help to save lives and protect livelihoods

What is livelihoods analysis and why is it relevant to high food prices?

When it is known early enough that severe food insecurity is a threat, the most effective way of saving lives is by protecting how people get their food. People acquire their food (and income) differently – through production or purchase, by harvesting or hunting wild foods, through gifts, or in exchange for work. To do this they rely on their 'livelihood assets': their labour and skills, land and other natural resources, livestock, tools, facilities (including health, education, banks, markets and roads), savings, social networks and political representation. By protecting people's livelihoods in times of crisis, the humanitarian response can save lives. When a person is livelihood-secure, they are food-secure (Hedlund, 2007). Better livelihoods analysis is therefore crucial for all agencies working in the context of rising food prices.

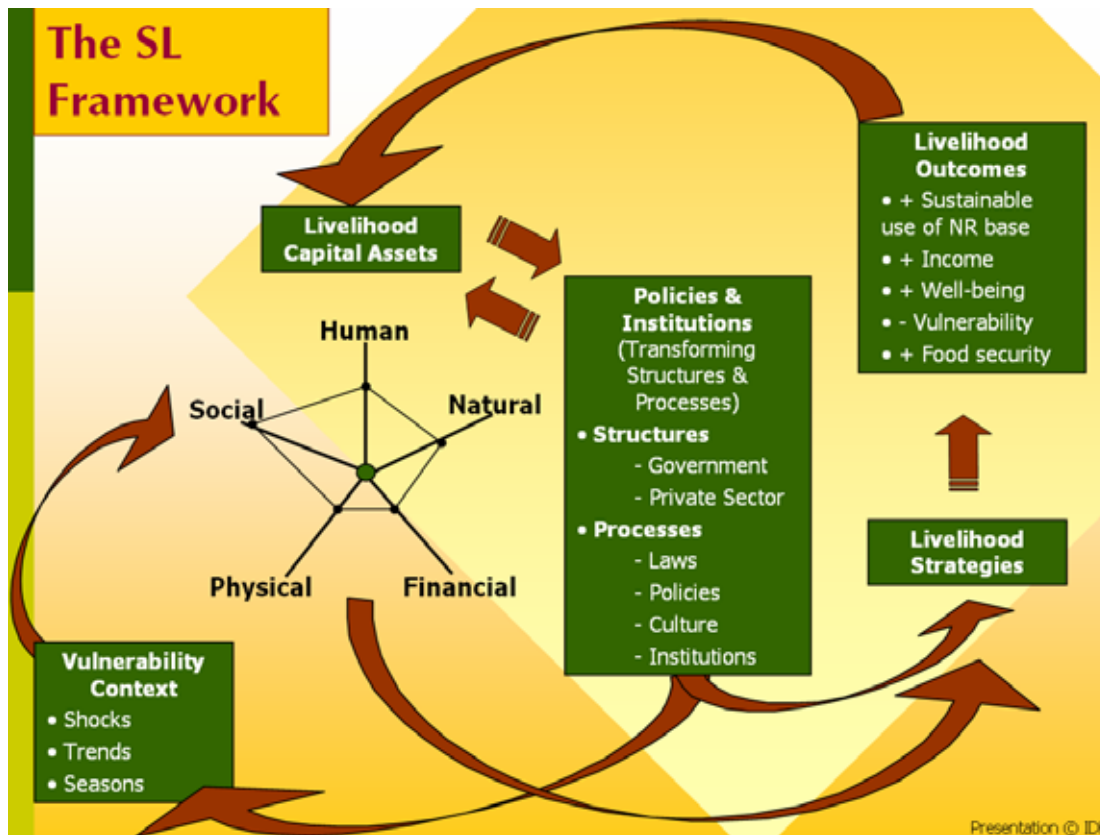
The livelihoods principles and framework (Figure 2) form the basis of all livelihoods programming. The fundamental principles of livelihoods programming are that it is people-centred, multi-level, and dynamic, and ultimately aims to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

The livelihoods framework provides a tool for analyzing people's livelihoods and the impact of specific threats or shocks on livelihood vulnerability. A key feature of livelihoods analysis is that it includes an analysis of household assets, strategies, priorities and goals at micro-level, and the policies, institutions and processes that affect livelihoods at national and international level

(macro-level). A second key feature is that it is participatory. The focus is on the needs and priorities as identified by the affected populations themselves. Assessments use participatory methods, such as PRA (participatory rural appraisal) or RRA (rapid rural appraisal) to identify people's problems and priorities (Jaspars, 2006).

In the context of high food prices, a dynamic understanding of peoples' livelihoods becomes essential – its power is not as a static model, but as a tool that enables understanding changes in the context of peoples' lives and how they impact on livelihoods.

Figure 2: The sustainable livelihoods framework



Source: www.livelihoods.org

More detailed information

Protection of livelihoods is complex, not least because of the need to take into account the multiple risks that surround producer investments and consumer decision-making over the longer run, rather than responding only to the shock that just happened. Put simply: it takes time, skill and commitment to understand people's livelihoods.

Because livelihood protection is complex, agencies with longer-term development programmes are often more likely to be able to implement a livelihoods-based emergency response. An agency with more knowledge of the communities it works with is more likely to make best use of local traditions and practices. Livelihood interventions are a combination of responses that require a wide range of technical skills and experience, and flexible funding. While some agencies can implement an effective multi-sectoral response, most will do better by staying focused on what they do well, and not overstressing themselves (CARE et al, 2005; Akilu and Wekesa, 2001). Given the importance of this competency-based division of labour, coordination and partnership between agencies become essential (USAID, 2003; DFID 2006a).

Partly as a result of these challenges, the livelihoods framework has rarely fully been used as the basis for emergency assessments. Emergency assessments may take a livelihoods approach, but more often focus on the impact of a disaster on households' food security or household economy. However, the livelihoods framework has played an important role in early warning systems. For example, FEWS-NET undertakes routine monitoring of data (e.g., rainfall, vegetation, crop production, market prices). All of these are important indicators of food security, but it is often difficult to link changes in these indicators to food security status of affected households. The livelihoods framework enables FEWS NET to link changes in these monitoring data to food security outcomes, using a livelihoods context for interpretation of food security and vulnerability information (see <http://www.fewsnet.org> for more information).

A common livelihoods-based assessment method is the household economy approach (HEA) of Save the Children UK (SC-UK), and elements of this have been incorporated into the assessment methods of many other organisations.

In the context of livelihoods, it is especially important to develop integrated information strategies which bring together early warning, assessment, targeting and monitoring and evaluation for responses should be an integral part of programme management in the face of rising food prices. Information systems need to be budgeted explicitly. The Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)⁵ work provides invaluable lessons. It represents a major step forward in efforts to create a standardised tool aimed at providing a "common currency" for classifying food security situations drawing on livelihood status, using a common scale which is comparable across countries. Lessons from the IPC process suggests that it may be especially valuable to convene a cross-organisational taskforce, bringing together information specialists, managers, and local partners, to ensure that the benefits of an integrated information strategy are realised across a region or country facing high food prices. Box 3 gives more information on classification systems for use in early warnings and assessments.

Box 3: Information classification systems

A number of classification systems are being developed to help interpret the findings of early warnings and assessments, to link findings with a particular response, and to facilitate comparison both within and across countries. These systems can help to determine when food insecurity is chronic or acute, when it is developing into a crisis or famine, when to conduct needs assessments, when to implement mitigation, relief or recovery operations, and when to end an intervention. These systems use benchmarks, thresholds or cut-offs to describe a situation, usually in relation to changes in crop and animal production, health (specifically nutritional status) and coping strategies.

Some agencies, such as SC-UK, Oxfam and WFP, have developed specific criteria for decision making on interventions to address food crises. Table 1 below summarises some of the criteria and other factors to take into account when deciding which type of livelihoods interventions to implement. Use of these criteria would undoubtedly lead to programming more appropriate than a standard response. More on information systems can be found via the following sources:

- *Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification* (Haan, 2006).
- *Famine intensity and magnitude scales: a proposal for an instrumental definition of famine* (Howe and Devereux, 2004).
- *Food security classification systems* (Young and Jaspars, 2006, Table 14).
- *Identification of Factors that Trigger Emergency Needs Assessments in Slow Onset Crisis* (WFP, 2005a).
- *Measuring Mortality, Nutritional Status and Food Security in Crisis Situations: The SMART Protocol* (SMART, 2005).

⁵ <http://www.ipcinfo.org/>

A forthcoming HPN Good Practice Guide developed by Tufts University (Maxwell et al, forthcoming 2008) usefully articulates an overall food security information system, which highlights the need for different kinds of information at different stages of the programming cycle. This is provided in Annex 8.

Sources of further information

- Criteria for decision-making on interventions to address food crisis (Jaspars, 2006 is presented in Table 4 of the current paper. For more on how to protect livelihoods in emergencies, see Jaspars (2006), *From Food Crisis to Fair Trade: Livelihoods Analysis, Protection and Support in Emergencies*.
- For more on HEA see the Food Economy Group website <http://www.feg-consulting.com> and Seaman, John, et al (2000) *The Household Economy Approach: A Resource Manual for Practitioners*. Save the Children UK, London. <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/foodsecurity/publications/manual.htm>
- For more on the Integrated Phase Classification see www.ipcinfo.org

2: Vulnerability-analysis tools can help to understand the potential impacts of high food prices in different contexts and on different groups

What is vulnerability analysis and why is it relevant to high food prices?

Humanitarian crises are the result of an event or process which affects a population that is inadequately prepared and unable to recover without external assistance. Vulnerability is the term used to describe the condition of such a population. This involves much more than the likelihood of being injured or killed by a particular hazard, and includes the type of livelihoods people engage in, and the impact of different hazards on them.

Vulnerability is crucially about the characteristics of people, and is a complex set of characteristics, including:

- **initial well-being:** nutritional status, physical and mental health, morale
- **livelihood and resilience:** asset pattern and capital, income and exchange options, qualifications
- **self-protection:** the degree of protection afforded by capability and willingness to build safe homes
- **community protection:** forms of hazard preparedness provided by society more generally, e.g. building codes, mitigation measures, shelters, preparedness
- **social and political networks and institutions:** social capital, but also the role of the institutional environment in setting good conditions for hazard precautions, peoples' rights to express needs, and of access to preparedness.
- In the context of the rising food prices, it is vital to understand vulnerabilities of different groups, both in general and also to food-price rises in particular. Four key groups likely to be especially vulnerable to high food prices are: agricultural, agro-pastoralist, pastoralist and urban poor households, as discussed below.

More detailed information

One of the most straightforward approaches to understanding vulnerability is the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis (CVA) framework. This is a simple matrix for viewing people's vulnerabilities⁶ and capacities in three broad, interrelated areas: material/physical, social/organisational and motivational/attitudinal (Table 2).

⁶ CVA makes a distinction between 'vulnerabilities' and 'needs': vulnerabilities are long-term factors that affect a community's ability to respond to events or make it susceptible to disasters; needs (in a disaster context) are immediate requirements for survival or recovery after disaster.

Table 2: The Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis (CVA) matrix

This is an example of CVA used as a tool to identify rehabilitation activities in 1992 in Sagada, Mountain Province, Philippines (an area prone to earthquakes and typhoons).

Aspect	Vulnerabilities	Capacities
Material/physical <i>What productive resources, skills and hazards exist?</i>	<p>Area is prone to typhoons and earthquakes, causing landslides, damaging irrigation canals and intakes.</p> <p>Earthquakes cause shift in water sources affecting drinking-water supply and irrigation facilities.</p> <p>Climate conditions permit only one rice crop; farming is highly dependent on irrigation.</p> <p>Fast-growing population, which causes pressure on natural resources.</p>	<p>Indigenous engineering/construction skills to build and repair water works</p> <p>Construction materials which are locally available.</p> <p>Employable skills other than farming (mining, weaving).</p> <p>Availability of new water sources to be tapped for potable water and irrigation.</p> <p>Traditional labour system to synchronise farm activities to avoid pests.</p>
Social/organisational <i>What are the relations and organisation among people?</i>	<p>Due to militarisation, many members of the People's Organisation (PO) became inactive, although now the PO is recovering again.</p>	<p>Presence of indigenous <i>dap-ay</i> system to mobilise villagers to take action and to guarantee sustainability of the projects.</p> <p>Presence of active PO (ASUP) linked to <i>dap-ay</i> system.</p> <p>Presence of traditional women's and youth organisations.</p> <p>PO is assisting non-members as well.</p>
Motivational/attitudinal <i>How does the community view its ability to create change?</i>	<p>Due to growing population, farming cannot provide for all needs any more. More young people leave the area for a better livelihood.</p>	<p>People fight against plans they do not like (such as the Chico Dam, mining and logging concessions).</p> <p>Positive attitude towards involvement of women in community decision making.</p> <p>High awareness of regional issues.</p> <p>High motivation for projects which benefit whole community, regardless of PO membership.</p>

Good gender analysis is especially crucial to ensure that both men and women benefit from efforts to deal with rising prices, and it should also be used to strengthen information and knowledge to guide longer-term actions. In the medium term, women's access to productive resources should be improved, and resources should be allocated for work on gender equality and women's empowerment. Just as critically, women must participate in making decisions that affect their lives.

This calls for more nuanced understandings of the dynamics of vulnerability (and resilience) in different communities and households, as well as better understanding of the role of asset ownership and livelihood networks in providing resilience and protecting against declines into severe and chronic poverty. At household level this means better analysis of the drivers of differential vulnerability within and between different types of household (male-, female-, elderly- and orphan-headed; asset-poor and asset-wealthy). Finally, social protection strategies need to be developed with a much better understanding of how individuals, households, communities and networks deal with the effects of food-price rises: how they cope and adapt, and why they are resilient in some cases and not in others. (See Idea 9 for more on this.)

In the context of high food prices, it is especially important to analyse the specific vulnerabilities of four particular household groups.

- **Agricultural households** rely on agricultural production as their main source of livelihood. The impact of soaring food prices on agricultural households depends on: whether the household is a net seller or a net buyer of food, how input costs are increasing compared to food prices, and whether increasing food prices are being received by all farmers.
- **Agro-pastoralist households** practice a mixture of farming and livestock production. The balance between the two ranges from households that are primarily agriculturalists but maintain some livestock, to households that are primarily pastoralists but also grow some limited crops (often in marginal agricultural areas). Agro-pastoralists are often left out of interventions that target either pastoralists or agriculturalists.
- **Pastoralist households** rely on livestock production as their main source of livelihood. At least some members of the households migrate with their herds. Pastoralists rely on livestock products such as milk and blood for some of their food consumption, but also purchase a significant amount of food such as cereals on the market using income earned from selling their livestock.
- **The urban poor** include households with limited income-generating capacity living in urban and peri-urban areas. They rely on urban livelihood activities, such as informal employment or petty trade. These households may have access to land and agricultural produce in rural areas that is theirs or owned by relatives, but they depend significantly or exclusively on the market for their food access.

Annex 3 provides an example of how potential impacts and vulnerabilities to rising food prices for each of these groups were analysed at a July 2008 workshop in Nairobi.

Understanding and dealing with long-term vulnerability links strongly to **disaster risk reduction**. Disasters are still seen by many as an interruption to development rather than a reality which must be planned for (World Bank, 2006b). This is particularly problematic in countries that experience recurrent drought. One result is the creation of parallel structures and programmes to address emergency needs. This may save lives in the short term, but the disconnect between relief and development means that emergency responses often contribute little to addressing the underlying conditions contributing to the disaster in the first place (REDSO, 2004; World Bank, 2006b). Slow-onset emergencies rarely happen in isolation from underlying processes of impoverishment and chronic food insecurity. While relief interventions may prevent an increase in chronic food insecurity as a result of high food prices, they won't reduce it without being linked to programmes explicitly aiming to reduce long-term vulnerabilities (DFID, 2006b).

Sources of further information

- Other tools include Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment, Participatory Vulnerability Assessment and Vulnerability Assessment Methodology (VAM) of the World Food Programme. For more information on such tools, see: <http://www.livelihoods.org/info/docs/vulnerability.doc>.
- **FIVIMS:** (Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Mapping System) Initiative Website is a useful set of tools and resources: www.fivims.net
- **The WFP VAM Tool and Network:** http://www.wfp.org/operations/VAM/documents/VAM_Eng_August_2007.pdf
- There is a VAM network of more than 120 experienced specialists in food security, nutrition, and economics or data collection, deployed in more than 50 countries around the world.
- Understanding the impact of Food Prices on Children (2008) by Plan International, which analyses the specific vulnerabilities of children to food price rises, can be downloaded here: http://www.plan-international.org/news/food_crisis_report/

3: Market analysis can offer a fast, cost-effective and empowering way of understanding and responding to people's priority needs

What is market analysis and why is it relevant to high food prices?

Most livelihoods in low-income countries are dependent on markets, with many people relying on market systems to provide food, essential goods and services, access to paid work and mechanisms for selling their produce. In emergency situations, market systems (e.g. trade networks) may be severely impaired or altered, but rarely disappear.

There are at least five reasons why it is valuable for humanitarian agencies to assess and understand markets rapidly in emergency situations, all of which are relevant to food-price rises.

1. Markets may offer a fast, cost-effective and empowering way to respond to people's priority needs, especially in terms of cash-based responses.
2. Inappropriate relief responses – especially prolonged in-kind relief – can do further major damage to market systems.
3. The way that local markets respond to humanitarian interventions (whether cash or in-kind) can indicate whether or not relief responses are working as intended.
4. Market recovery is a necessary aspect of livelihood rehabilitation and food security, and plays a crucial role in the transition from relief to livelihood recovery.
5. Crises in market systems can also be opportunities for 'building back better' and addressing issues of market power, equity and access.

Good reasons for undertaking market analysis in the context of high food prices are to:

- help meet priority emergency needs
- assist livelihoods support and rehabilitation
- design better longer-term social protection
- reduce poverty through sustainable economic development.

More detailed information

Market analysis plays an important role on the development side of the aid equation. In emergencies, there are also a number of specific markets that can be especially important, as shown in Box 4.

Box 4: Which markets are most important?

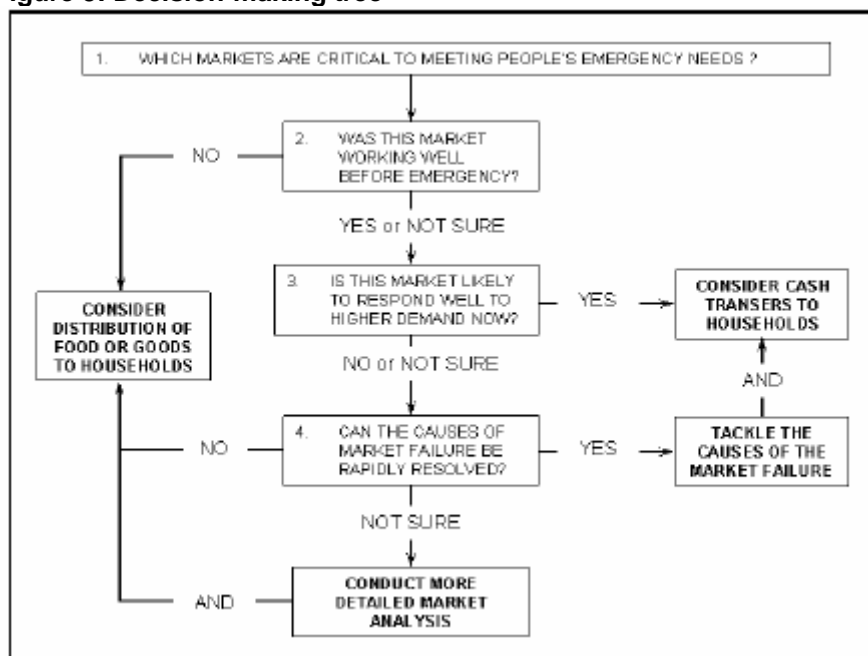
Which markets might matter in meeting priority emergency needs?			
Consumption markets		Markets for sale of produce and assets	Markets that support market functioning
Food markets	Non-food markets		
Staple crops	Shelter materials	Labour	Financial services
Substitution crops	Toiletries/sanitation	Cash crops	Transport services
	Personal travel	Livestock	Other business services
	Agricultural inputs	Jewellery	
	Veterinary services		

When undertaking market analysis, there are four key dimensions of a market system to consider.

1. At the centre of any particular market system are transactions between buyers and sellers of a specific service or commodity. These transactions can be as simple as an exchange between two individuals (e.g. wages for labour), but more often they involve a sequence of interrelated transactions (a supply chain).
2. The core transactions in a market system are underpinned by a range of supporting services that include everything from public infrastructure (e.g. roads), to market information (e.g. about prices, demand) and privately provided services (e.g. transport, finance).
3. All these relationships are governed to some extent by formal and informal rules (the institutional environment) which determine behaviour and practices, shape relationships, generate and provide information, knowledge and incentives. Rules range from statutory laws and regulations to industry-specific standards and informal arrangements and cultural norms (such as gender roles).
4. The diversity of other stakeholders, with their varying roles, capacity, influence and competing interests, contributes to shaping the market-system rules and functions.
5. Ideally, all of these aspects need to be incorporated in a sound analysis of how a particular market system worked before food-price hikes, how it might have been affected by a particular shock, and how it might be supported to recovery from that shock.

The work of Practical Action Consulting and Oxfam⁷ has led to the development of a 'market decision-making tree', which focuses on four fundamental questions, supported by a number of more detailed questions and actions, which are of specific importance for emergency-response planners and managers. The questions in detail are shown in Annex 9. Figure 3 below shows how the questions fit together in a practical and easy-to-use decision-making-tree.

Figure 3: Decision-making tree



⁷ For more information, see: http://www.practicalaction.org/docs/consulting/Market_Analysis_in_Emergencies_-_Phase_One_Report_-_FINAL.pdf.

Cross-organisational efforts in market analysis are especially illuminating. Market analysis by institutions such as CILSS, FEWS NET, SIMA and WFP generates the following lessons.

- A sub-regional or regional approach, covering all the key trade-linked zones in West Africa, is preferable to a purely 'national' approach.
- Assessments should devote more attention to demand factors at the micro level, in addition to analysing the various sources of food supply, prices and market and trade structures.
- Market monitoring should be conducted on the basis of an agreed understanding of the market's structure, conduct and performance, and the analysis should cover flow information, as well as prices.
- Partnerships for market assessments should be broadened to capture the multi-dimensional character of markets, and to agree on conclusions and recommendations.
- Box 5 illustrates the importance of market analysis in the context of rising food prices in Niger and Nigeria in 2004/05. This example highlights the importance of a nuanced approach to market analysis which challenges 'received wisdoms' about the groups most affected by rising prices.

Box 5: Food-price rises and markets in Niger and Nigeria, 2004/05

The hike in food prices in Niger followed steep price rises in Nigeria, caused by a variety of factors including lower production, and buoyant demand from consumers and the poultry and food-processing sectors. Higher prices in Nigeria caused a drastic drop in exports to Niger, while cereal flows reversed: Niger started to supply Nigeria. This trade-driven supply squeeze was compounded by lower domestic crop production because of locust attacks and some dry spells.

The national system for agricultural market information, SIMA, and FEWS NET reported relatively high price levels during 2004/05. This was not well received by humanitarian actors and donors. The reasons advanced to explain the price increases were neither complete nor convincing, mainly because of a lack of shared knowledge of cereal markets and trade, and the absence of reliable statistics on imports and agricultural production in Nigeria. In addition, humanitarian actors did not understand the dependence of households in Niger on food-market purchases, how households were linked to markets and how these relations had evolved. There was also no agreed alert threshold for price increases among humanitarian actors. As a result, humanitarian actors did not agree on the significance of the price hike or its impacts until very late in the crisis.

The widespread publicity given to food prices and markets during the Niger crisis encouraged greater analysis of cross-border trade and markets. Public awareness of the importance of markets also increased. Journalists, NGOs and other institutions started reporting on food and livestock markets, and FEWS NET, SIMA and CILSS began conducting missions to markets in northern Nigeria. These missions, combined with WFP's Niger market profile, provided an explanation of the 2005 price hike.

Source: <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2885>

Sources of further information

- More information on market analysis can be found in the Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) Toolkit, currently being piloted across a number of NGOs. An electronic discussion group for EMMA can be accessed from www.dgroups.org/groups/rmat

4: Scenarios development can help to ‘future-test’ programmes

What is scenario development and why is it relevant to high food prices

Once the analysis of the present situation is complete, it is important to extend it into the future to assess likely future impacts, and possibly to consider several different scenarios. This is especially important in terms of the effects of rising food prices, given the uncertainty of the price-rise situation. There are several different methods of scenario development, as discussed below.

Current high prices could be short-lived, but some argue that the world may be facing a ‘new era’ of higher and rising food prices – this is still being debated (Maxwell et al, 2008). The scenarios in Box 6 illustrate a range of circumstances that food-supply actors in both developed and developing countries might expect to face in the months and years to come.

Box 6: Scenarios

Global policy scenarios (Chatham House, 2008)

The following four food-price scenarios are adapted from work by the Chatham House Food Supply Project to consider the challenges created and their impact on the EU.

1. ‘Just a blip’: the present high price of food proves to be a brief spike with a return to cheap food at some point soon.
2. ‘Food inflation’: food prices remain high into the medium–long term.
3. ‘Into a new era’: existing food systems have reached their limits and must undergo evolutionary change.
4. ‘Serious crisis’: a major global food crisis develops.

Operational scenarios

The following three scenarios illustrate the kinds of situations that may be faced by actors across the humanitarian system.

1. An NGO runs a programme which uses locally purchased grain to support displaced rural poor. The relief needs do not change much, but the budget is no longer adequate to buy enough food.
2. A UN agency runs a programme which provides a self-targeted safety net, based on public works, with payment in food supplied internationally. The numbers attending are expected to double, but there are serious uncertainties about the international pipeline.
3. A donor supports cash work in a particular programme, and prices have doubled so people can’t buy enough food with the disbursements.

More detailed information

Scenario-building can be undertaken on a quantitative or qualitative basis. The following four types of scenarios can be applied in relief settings. Table 3 presents the relative advantages of each method, and examples of best use.

Best-Middle-Worst: This approach allows planners to examine and plan for different scales of the same potential crisis or emergency. The global policy scenarios in Box 6 are an example of Best-Middle-Worst. In the context of the price rises, in any given country for a given programme, analysis of existing livelihoods, market and vulnerability contexts can be extended into the future by identifying different price-rise scenarios, and working out the potential impacts on individuals, households and communities.

Augmentation or step scenarios: This type of scenario is often used in planning for refugee and displacement crises where, as the crisis progresses, the number of people affected progressively increases, along with the scale of their humanitarian need. In turn, the response capacity required of humanitarian organisations also increases. Augmentation or step scenarios try to set levels at which additional action and response capacity is required. In some situations, the thresholds established by these scenarios are tied to resources. When the threshold is reached, the resources are released. In the context of the food prices, this could mean developing different price-rise scenarios (e.g. 10, 20, 50 or 100 per cent rises) in different food commodities.

Timeline approach: This approach defines conditions at set points in time, starting with the onset of the emergency. It then allows planners to define what actions their organisations need to take, and when to take them, in order to respond adequately to the situation. It is a simple and effective way of mapping out the evolving nature of a crisis, and provides a basis for realistic planning. It is especially useful for rapid-onset crises like floods, but can also be used in slow-onset scenarios and could be useful for planning in accordance with cropping seasons. This would mean developing food-price-rise scenarios for different timescales (e.g. 3, 6 or 12 months), and taking account of seasonal variations.

Operational resources approach: Rather than focusing on the humanitarian impact of a potential crisis as a basis for planning, this type of scenario is based on understanding the types of operation or response required under different circumstances. In many cases a number of different scenarios result in similar operational parameters. For example, floods and cyclones often have similar humanitarian consequences, thus demanding similar responses. An operational approach would develop a scenario or set of scenarios which could be used in both cases. The kinds of scenarios developed under a best-middle-worst situation could be linked to an operational resources approach (Choularton, 2007), also known as an operationally representative approach.

Table 3: Advantages and uses of different approaches to scenario development

Approach	Advantages	Best use
Best-, most likely and worst- case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a basis for planning for different scales of problem • Easy to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for a single situation • When scenario development involves many actors
Augmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for planning for situations which increase in magnitude over time • Easy to build plans which allow for expansion of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement situations (IDPs and refugees)
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows planners to adapt operations over time while a crisis evolves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When rapid-onset disasters occur, response needs can change very rapidly in the initial days and weeks
Operationally representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for a greater focus on operations • Can be used to develop more flexible plans • Can be used to identify preparedness actions that help in multiple situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situations that are difficult to predict

Sources of further information

- The UK Cabinet Office reference on scenario development: http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/survivalguide/skills/eb_scenarios.htm
- *Contingency Planning and Humanitarian Action: A Review of Practice*. HPN Network paper 59 has useful information about scenarios

5: Contingency planning can help to improve operational anticipation and flexibility

What is contingency planning and why is it relevant to high food prices?

“Contingency planning is a management tool used to analyze the impact of potential crises and ensure that adequate and appropriate arrangements are made in advance to respond in a timely, effective and appropriate way to the needs of the affected population(s). Contingency planning is a tool to anticipate and solve problems that typically arise during humanitarian response.” (IASC, 2007, p4)

To be effective, analysis and scenarios need to be combined with strategies that enable governments, donors and aid agencies to respond in a timely fashion to the onset of a crisis related to food prices. More specifically, if the scenarios developed indicate that a wide range of impacts is possible in a given setting, it will be vital to establish programmatic contingency plans, specifying actions which will be triggered if and when each specific scenario unfolds.

For example, with a scenario looking at best, worst and middle (or most likely) cases (see Idea 4, above), the programme response should arguably be geared around the ‘most likely’ scenario, but mechanisms should be in place to ensure sensitivity to the possibility of either the best- or worst-case scenario occurring. The programmatic approach should then be adapted accordingly. Contingency planning is ‘a process, in anticipation of potential crises, of developing strategies, arrangements and procedures to address the humanitarian needs of those adversely affected by crises’ (Choularton, 2007).

More detailed information

During an emergency, time pressure is one of the most acute problems. Contingency planning allows time to deal with anticipated problems before the onset of a crisis. The benefits include the following:

- Contingency planning provides an opportunity to identify constraints and focus on operational issues prior to the on-set of a crisis. For example, it provides opportunities to map the vulnerabilities of a potential target population, potential areas of rights violations, assess logistical infrastructure such as port or warehousing capacity, and assess coordination and institutional capacity.
- An active contingency planning process enables individuals, teams, organizations to establish working relationships that can make a critical difference during a crisis. By working together in a contingency planning process, people develop a common understanding of common challenges, of each other’s capacities and organizational requirements. This helps facilitate effective collaboration in a crisis.
- Contingency planning processes can help to reinforce coordination mechanisms by keeping them active and by clarifying roles and responsibilities before a crisis.
- Contingency planning allows organizations to put in place measures that enhance preparedness, ahead of a potential crisis (IASC, 2007)

Good contingency plans will include appropriate programming options and triggers for action, as well as predetermined roles and responsibilities among different actors. In order to act upon these plans, adequate and easily accessible contingency resources must be available. At the operational level, managers should use the developed scenarios to start a process of reflection, planning and advocacy to ensure that programmes and projects are up to the task. The

realisation of specific scenarios can act as a trigger for specific decisions about how the programme should or should not change. Contingency planning is distinct from emergency planning or preparedness, which consists of all activities taken in anticipation of a crisis, to allow for an effective emergency response. Box 7 lays out the key elements of a contingency plan.

Box 7: Key elements of a contingency plan

Question	Contingency-plan element
What could happen, given different price-rise scenarios?	Scenarios (see Idea 4)
What would we need to do in each price-rise situation?	Response strategy
How would we do it in each price-rise situation?	Implementation plan
What would we need to do this in each price-rise situation?	Operational support plan
What can we do to prepare for each price-rise situation?	Preparedness plan
How much would it cost in each price-rise situation?	Budget

There is evidence, supported by an overwhelming consensus among practitioners, that contingency planning is effective in improving humanitarian responses by:

- enabling individuals, teams, organisations and communities to establish working relationships that can make a critical difference during a crisis and to develop a common understanding of problems, capacities, objectives and organisational requirements
- helping to reinforce coordination mechanisms by keeping them active, and by clarifying roles and responsibilities before a crisis
- providing humanitarian staff with the opportunity to assess, think about and discuss response options before the pressure of a crisis makes it difficult – in other words, contingency planning can be a tool for organisational learning
- identifying constraints – information gaps, for instance, or a lack of capacity – before the onset of a crisis, and allowing action to be taken to address them; in recent years, this aspect of contingency planning has become a major focus for many humanitarian agencies.

It is also useful to highlight the two broad approaches are common in humanitarian contingency planning (Choularton, 2007):

- Needs-based planning uses overall anticipated humanitarian needs as a basis for planning the scope of interventions. Planners using the needs-based approach must analyse existing operational capacity to determine how much augmentation will be needed to meet anticipated needs.
- Capacity-based planning uses available capacity as a basis for planning, regardless of overall anticipated needs. Planners using a capacity-based approach determine what their organisation can manage in a crisis, and plan according to that. This approach is often used in a single organisation contingency planning process, and therefore can be artificially limiting because it does not take into account the capacities of other organisations. However, the capacity-based approach can be effectively used to plan for the initial phase of a crisis where external resources are not readily available.

The advantages of each are highlighted by Choularton:

“...Needs-based planning may be unrealistic because it may not fully take into account resource constraints. However, it does allow for a more explicit consideration both of capacity and of overall need; capacity-based approaches, by contrast, may result in under-planning when gaps between need and capacity are unfilled. In practice, a combination of these two approaches is advisable. Overall anticipated needs must be compared with available capacity so that gaps can be identified and plans made to fill these gaps...” (Choularton, 2007, page 26)

Key points in effective contingency planning

- Involvement of senior managers and decision-makers is critical for effective contingency planning.
- Contingency works best in an effective and established preparedness framework.
- It is important to have good links between early warning, assessment and contingency planning.
- Participants should ideally include all those dealing with the food-price rise in a particular context.
- Pre-established triggers for contingency planning can be very useful (Box 8).
- Funding and resources are crucial.

Box 8: The WFP Index for triggering contingency planning

WFP has been working on an index for triggering contingency planning when an emergency is detected. This is the Livelihood Protection Cost Index (LPCI), a weather-based index aimed at providing an objective, independently verifiable and replicable indicator of livelihood loss. The index is developed by evaluating historical weather data and determining its correlation to crop yields and revenues (Hess, 2007). One possible application of the LPCI to pastoral areas is being discussed, whereby weather data could be correlated to grass cover and forage conditions using the Livestock Early Warning System (LEWS) methodology (Lautze, 2003). Similar approaches might be usefully explored in the context of rising food prices.

One of the chief benefits of contingency planning is that it allows time to think. Hasty decisions made in crises repeatedly result in unintended negative consequences. Allowing adequate time and attention for developing appropriate response strategies can have a significant impact on the quality of humanitarian action. Implementing and maintaining dynamic contingency planning processes remains a major challenge for humanitarians beset with competing demands, limited staff time and constrained resources. This reinforces the need for and potential of better collective contingency planning approaches.

Sources of further information

- IASC Guidelines on Contingency Planning, which has a special focus on inter-agency contingency planning, see <http://www.undg.org/docs/8291/IA-CP-Guidelines.pdf>
- For more detailed review of practices in humanitarian contingency planning and scenarios, see *Contingency Planning and Humanitarian Action: A Review of Practice*. HPN Network paper 59

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

It is essential for programme implementation to be guided by analysis and evidence, a good understanding of changing contexts, and an awareness of the range of tools and techniques available for meeting relief needs in the face of rising and high food prices. The next part of this paper addressed coordination and partnerships across organisations (Idea 6), the short-term

actions that can be taken to promote agricultural productivity (Idea 7), and the long-standing question about the balance between cash and food aid (Idea 8). Idea 9 addresses the range of social protection approaches that can be utilised, as well as highlighting principles of good practice in implementing programmes of social protection.

6: Coordination and partnerships between humanitarian organisations, development organisations, national and local governments and private firms are vital to an effective response

What is coordination and partnership and why is it relevant to high food prices?

According to one senior government official, consulted as part of this study:

“...agencies must use their best available knowledge to understand in-country capacities, and ensure that their programming is in line with overall government policies, and with what else is going on... The way we are seeing it, they are still not working as though we are all in the same boat... but on this issue, perhaps more than any other, coherence is not a nice to have but an essential to have...”
(ALNAP interview, 2008)

Numerous initiatives have called for better coordination, most notably the High Level Task Force (HLTF), in the Comprehensive Framework for Action:

“...Experiences from initial, rapid responses have underlined the critical need for close coordination among all stakeholders—governments, donors, HLTF organisations, and others—not only on agriculture, but also on all other issues affecting global food and nutrition security. Government leadership will be essential to driving country-level response. To permit well-informed, targeted and efficient responses, international agencies are working with national authorities to implement country level assessments on their food security situations”
(HLTF, 2008, p38)

More detailed information

At the country level, national governments, supported by donors, technical agencies, the private sector, civil society and NGOs will need to take concerted action (CFA, 2008) in response to rising food prices. Of special importance to international agencies, NGOs and businesses will be access to government information on prices and markets. Because of the diversity of situations in different countries, the design of programmes must be country-driven and country-owned (IFPRI, 2008a), with the proviso that this will not be possible in some countries. A recent paper by OXFAM highlights ten key actions for consideration by governments of developing countries (See Annex 4).

The Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) identifies actions that countries can take and adapt to achieve improved security of food and nutrition:

- establish country-level ‘partnerships for food’ which build on existing mechanisms and programmes
- ensure ongoing shared assessment and analysis
- consolidate actions to avoid overlaps and identify gaps
- review existing monitoring mechanisms
- promote effective public communications.

At the regional level, the CFA encourages partnership with regional and sub-regional organisations, and with the regional development banks to enhance coordination of analysis, monitoring and responses to the food crisis according to context. Finally, at the international level, strengthened partnership and increased actions by all stakeholders in a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent manner are critical, as many factors underlying the food crisis are global in nature and require actions across country and regional borders.

However, coordination structures are often created by international agencies to meet their own coordination needs, neglecting national government and non-government partners (USAID, 2003; DEC 2004). It then becomes difficult to obtain a coherent and consistent interpretation of the situation ('it makes sense and we agree'). This can lead to a lack of agreement on the most appropriate response, and so to delays in implementation. In Sudan in 1999 and Niger in 2005, agencies failed to advocate collectively for the right response due to a lack of shared analysis and understanding. In the absence of a coherent message, the media portrayed the crises inaccurately, which put pressure on agencies to respond, probably inappropriately (DEC, 1999; CARE et al, 2005).

Coordination demands staff, time and commitment, and should be prioritised in work plans and funding proposals (GOK/KFSM, 2001). In Kenya in 1999/2000, the Oxfam programme manager spent more than 50 per cent of his time on coordination. As a result, Oxfam was able to influence policy and programming in early warning, coordination and emergency response (Jaspars, 2006). Coordination and partnerships are essential to protecting livelihoods, and reducing malnutrition. These interventions must be integrated and cover multiple sectors; they should be technically sound and attain good coverage without sacrificing quality. Success is more likely with local government and non-government partners, who can use their networks, knowledge and experience (Akilu and Wekesa, 2001).

Coordinated advocacy is especially important in the face of rising food prices, to ensure that the conditions faced by the most vulnerable are addressed in a timely and effective manner. This advocacy will require both internal and external dimensions.

- Within organisations, advocacy will be essential to allow for greater flexibility and decentralised approaches to deal with local contextual changes. This is especially important given the pressure to implement an agreed programme according to plan – especially where complex logistical processes have been established. This pressure can act against adaptive programming as needs change or as analysis is refined in the light of local realities (Darcy et al, 2007), necessitating better internal and external advocacy to enable more appropriate responses.
- External to organisations, advocacy is important in terms of coordinated approaches to awareness raising, and also to call for greater collaboration in the face of the rising prices, especially in the context of vulnerabilities and possible future shocks, in calling for coordinated actions, and in advocacy around appropriate responses - with special attention on social protection approaches.

Sources of further information

- See the Comprehensive Framework for Action (2008) for detailed outline for how agencies should work together in the face of rising food prices:
[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-7GSPD6-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-7GSPD6-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf)

7: Short-term action needed to promote agricultural growth requires access to seeds, fertilisers, water, technology and credit response

What is short-term action to boost agriculture and why is it relevant to high food prices?

To counteract dramatic increases in costs and demand, and bring food prices back to levels that the poor can afford, agriculture needs to make big leaps in productivity (ICRISAT, 2008). Boosting agriculture will potentially increase the supply of food to local markets, reduce poor farmers' need to purchase food and increase their income from the sale of food at higher prices. It is vital, however, that any shorter-term agricultural interventions are linked to longer-term national policy and practices in the areas of environment, agriculture and markets. Otherwise they may do more damage than good. For example, provision of chemical fertiliser and pesticides may generate a rapid and significant impact but may be unsustainable in the long term, as these inputs are costly to purchase and can damage the environment and soil quality.

More detailed information

Private-sector involvement Carefully subsidised programmes for seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, technologies and water should involve the private sector from the beginning, and facilitate a transition from initial 'crash programmes' to market-based arrangements. Such programmes should be focused on and limited to least-developed countries. This would jump-start agricultural growth in the short term, create income-earning opportunities in the crisis, and lower prices (IFPRI, 2008a).

Seeds, crop varieties and support systems Good seeds are essential for expanding production. Improved crop varieties use fertiliser more efficiently, are more resilient to stresses (such as drought, pests and diseases), and incorporate grain-quality traits that markets will pay more for (IFPRI, 2008a). Improved seed systems, institutions and policies are also required to multiply these seeds and get the right varieties to the right locations at the right time. Fewer and fewer seed interventions involve direct distribution, given the problems of ensuring seed appropriateness and quality. Instead, approaches that allow for greater beneficiary participation are preferred, such as seed fairs, seed vouchers and cash for seed. Needs assessments should determine whether there is a real need for seed, and analyse the capacity of local markets to meet it (FAO, 2005; Levine and Chastre, 2004). In Kenya in 2000, CRS organised 14 seed fairs in three weeks, providing preferred seed for timely planting to over 8,000 families. Other organisations relying on seed ordered from companies failed to receive supplies in time for planting (CRS, 2004). A recent publication (Sperling, 2008) provides guidance for assessing the security of seed systems in situations of acute or chronic stress, with a seven step process which enables managers and field staff to assess whether seed systems are needed, and guides appropriate choices.

Water-harvesting and water-storage systems

Dry spells can cause severe stress to crops and can drastically reduce yields and water productivity. Water can be harvested and stored at the field or farm level to be used later during dry spells as supplemental irrigation to alleviate moisture stress, thereby increasing yields and supporting the more intensive use of other inputs. Improved soil fertility and cropping-systems management are also necessary parts of fully integrated systems: Box 9 describes a successful example. Challenges include technical and socioeconomic issues involved in local adaptation of technologies as costs and associated returns.

Box 9: African market gardens

Many dryland areas in Africa have access to sustainable groundwater supplies that could revolutionise agriculture for poor farmers. Inexpensive gravity-fed drip irrigation enables farmers to produce 'more crop per drop', multiplies their incomes through high-value vegetable and tree products and insulates farmers from drought risk. Household food security and nutrition are also increased (with vitamins supplied from vegetables).

ICRISAT has developed an affordable gravity-powered drip irrigation system for small plots managed individually or collectively (e.g. by women's groups) called the African Market Garden (AMG). When water supply is assured, the tropical drylands become climatically suitable for a wide range of crops, such as tomato, onion, date palm, citrus, mango, lettuce, grapes, peppers and many others. Farmers located close to growing urban areas can readily market these crops and even develop export markets e.g. for fruit juices, dried fruits, fresh-frozen vegetables, herbs and ornamentals.

The system can be readily scaled up; farmers typically begin with plot sizes of just 1/20th of one hectare and add capacity in subsequent seasons by re-investing the increased profits. The investment required per farmer for the initial small plot is only about US\$200 (often partially sponsored by donors) which is more than compensated by increased net incomes in a single growing season. About 2,000 AMGs have been sponsored and disseminated with training in West African dryland countries in recent years. A USAID project, for example in 2007, catalysed 500 AMGs in Burkina Faso and Ghana, in the latter case increasing the utility and profitability of an irrigated rice development. The AMG is now spreading in Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Chad, and Cape Verde.

Source: Ortiz (2008).

Pastoralists

Humanitarian interventions still largely fail to address the needs of pastoralists (USAID, 2003; WFP, 2006c). More than other livelihood systems, pastoralism challenges standard ways of providing assistance during a disaster.

Pastoralism in drylands has evolved specifically to cope with variations in rainfall from one year to another. When drought hits, the best way to help pastoralists is to support them in doing what they normally do for themselves. This includes protecting core breeding stock, encouraging diversification of herds, and ensuring the migration and mobility of animals, and access to water, pasture and markets (Jaspars, 2006).

Flexibility

Interventions need to adapt to changing conditions. Collection and storage of fodder and rehabilitation of water points may be appropriate at the early stage of a crisis. Later, emergency veterinary care, de-stocking and fodder distribution will be needed, followed by re-stocking and livelihood diversification at the recovery stage. Evaluations of the 1999/2000 drought in Kenya provide a wealth of learning on livestock interventions.

Financial services

Finally, it will be important to ensure that financial services such as insurance and credit are available to poor farmers. In Thailand, for example, small producers are going out of business because banks will not lend them money to manage between harvests (Oxfam International, April 2008). However, some innovative mechanisms to address risk for poor farmers are being developed, as described in Boxes 10 and 11.

Box 10: Pilot scheme for weather insurance in Ethiopia

OXFAM America and Swiss Re have announced plans to fund an innovative pilot project to introduce weather insurance for a staple cereal crop in the village of Adi Ha, Tigray Regional State, Ethiopia. The pilot will adopt a holistic approach to risk management, examining the suitability of weather insurance and risk-reduction measures such as seasonal forecasting and improved agricultural practices. All efforts will be undertaken in close collaboration with the local farming community with the overall objective of alleviating poverty.

Source: http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/press_releases/swiss-re-and-oxfam-america-launch-joint-risk-management-initiative-for-farmers-in-tigray-ethiopia.

Box 11: Index-linked weather insurance in Ethiopia

During the 2006 agricultural season in Ethiopia, the World Food Programme (WFP), World Bank, and Government of Ethiopia piloted an index-based insurance scheme with Axa Re to protect farmers against the impacts of severe drought. In the event of rainfall significantly below historic averages, pointing to the likelihood of widespread crop failure, payment would be made to WFP, which would then transfer the funds to the government's Productive Safety Net Programme for distribution as cash assistance to individual households. As it turned out, rainfall in 2006 was above average, so no payout was triggered.

However, the pilot did demonstrate the feasibility of developing: market mechanisms to finance drought risk; objective, timely and accurate indicators for triggering drought assistance; and incentive for governments and donors to put contingency plans in place, allowing earlier response to shocks. This type of insurance could also reduce the reliance of NGOs on the media for fundraising. WFP is currently developing further plans for the application of similar index-based insurance facilities, combining the use of contingency funds to cover smaller losses, contingent grant or debt to finance medium losses, and weather-index-based insurance to cover major catastrophes.

Source: ProVention website (risk transfer resource section)

Sources of further information

- For more on seed vouchers and fairs, see Longley (2006) and Jaspars (2006). Also see the Guide to Seed System Security Assessment, developed by Sperling (2008)

8: Review and change the balance between cash, food and other support as the context changes

What is the balance between cash and food and why is it important?

Operational decisions around the provision of food, cash, a combination, or something else entirely are all too often based on availability of certain kinds of resources. It is increasingly recognised that this decision should be evidence-based, drawing on good livelihoods, vulnerability and market analyses and clear objectives. The decision should not be taken according to what resources are available, what the agency has the capacity to distribute, or the donor's preferences.

More detailed information

Food security has often been thought of as the result of production deficits, and food aid has been the standard humanitarian response. Food aid can save lives (Steering Committee, 2004; WFP, 2006; C-SAFE, 2007), particularly in contexts where food is unavailable and when general distribution rations are adequate in both nutritional quality (including micronutrients) and caloric quantity (greater than 2,000kcal per person per day) (Duffield et al, 2004). Free food distribution

should start early, be reliable and last long enough to serve as an income transfer during a food crisis (DFID, 2006a). It can also support and protect livelihoods. School feeding, food for work, even free food distribution, can be used to prevent the sale of livelihood assets in order to get money to buy food or create assets such as educated children, fertile soil or good roads.

There is a longstanding concern, however, that food aid can have negative impacts on local markets, causing a decline in prices and losses for farmers who would otherwise sell their crops at a higher price. The private sector may also be affected, as, in the absence of food aid, it would import, process, trade and sell more food. However, there is not yet enough evidence to settle this point (Mauder, 2006).

It is clear that it matters how food aid is programmed and where it is purchased. Food-aid distributions need to be well targeted – to the right people in the right way – and well timed so as not to coincide with harvests (Jere, 2007; Hammond and Maxwell, 2002). Local and regional purchase of food aid reduces the cost and delivery time, and may help local producers. Coordination reduces the risk that local purchases will drive up prices (REDSO, 2004; WFP, 2003a).

As understanding of food and livelihood insecurity evolves, evaluations indicate that food aid is not the only possible response and sometimes not the most efficient. Given questions about the impact of food aid, and the increasing cost of procuring and shipping food, donors, governments and agencies alike are beginning to consider and offer alternatives such as cash transfers (including cash grants, cash for work, providing cash to microfinance institutions for low-interest loans, and vouchers for goods such as seeds and livestock) and market-based interventions.

According to Harvey and Holmes (2007), key concerns about using cash as an alternative to food include that it is: harder to target, more prone to corruption, inflationary in weak markets, disadvantageous to women and impossible to deliver safely in conflict environments, but recent evidence suggests that these concerns can be overcome. Evaluations have suggested that the use of cash can be more cost-effective than in-kind assistance, and can create positive multiplier effects in local economies. Overwhelmingly, recipients have been found to spend cash sensibly on immediate basic needs and investments in livelihoods, as well as to access health and education services.

Cash transfers have been successfully delivered during conflicts in Somalia, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and have formed an important part of post-conflict strategies, for instance in Mozambique (Harvey and Holmes, 2007). Suggested minimum criteria for long-term cash transfers in unstable situations or fragile states are (Harvey and Holmes, 2007):

- a market system that would respond to a cash injection, enabling people to buy goods in nearby markets at reasonable prices
- a way of delivering cash safely to people
- sufficient security for monitoring and a sufficient presence of implementing agencies in the field
- willingness by authorities to accept and engage with a social transfer programme.

A recent study by Simon Levine on the feasibility of cash transfers for social welfare in the lowlands of Lesotho, for both short-term humanitarian intervention and longer-term social protection, contributes to this debate. The study found that cash transfers were feasible. There was no evidence that running a voucher programme would be simpler or more effective than a cash programme, but there are several reasons for favouring cash over vouchers. These include familiarity and transparency, cost-effectiveness and fewer demands on organisational capacity (Levine, 2007).

While the obstacles to using cash aid appear to have been exaggerated, agencies are still learning about when and how to use it. As several observers have noted, there is now the risk of recreating the same kind of ‘automatic’ response about cash that developed around food aid, without a clear body of empirical evidence to help determine whether cash, food, or some other input is the most effective resource to enhance food security in the context of crises. Further support such as additional credit, seeds or fishing nets, and other services to meet shelter, health, education, and psycho-social support needs may be required in addition to cash grants.

Here are some key findings from evaluations of cash-based responses particularly relevant to slow-onset disasters and food insecurity.⁸

- **Where markets can provide enough food, and food insecurity is a result of lack of purchasing power, cash can work.** During the crisis stage of an emergency, cash is most often spent on food, often with the nutritional benefit of increasing variety in the diet (Oxfam, 2006b; Concern 2006). After the crisis, cash is more likely to be spent on recovery, e.g. re-stocking for pastoralists, repaying debts, or investing in income-generating activities to provide an alternative source of income (CARE et al, 2005).
- **The combination of food plus cash can provide all the benefits of both while avoiding the limitations of each.** In Malawi in 2005/06, providing food aid met subsistence needs while providing cash allowed beneficiaries to meet important non-food needs, such as for soap, medicine, and school fees (Concern, 2006).
- **Cash may be more appropriate for certain groups such as pastoralists.** Pastoralists have a well-developed relationship with markets for barter and sale of livestock products and purchase of food. Cash is also simply easier to carry (Oxfam, 2006a; ECHO, 2002).

Food or Cash?

The following are key points to consider when considering cash-based responses.

- **Accurate market analysis and monitoring is crucial** to ensure that cash provided will meet needs as intended (Oxfam, 2006b; World Bank, 2006a). The food equivalent – how much food the cash will buy – can vary considerably between seasons and places, and particularly between urban and rural areas (Oxfam, 2005). This applies to other commodities as well, such as seeds and livestock.
- **There must be realistic assessment of the capacity to distribute cash, and sufficient funds for capacity building.** This includes the management and administration of cash, accounting, logistics of transport and distribution, supervision and monitoring (SCUK, 2005a). This has been a challenge in Ethiopia, Zambia and Malawi (World Bank, 2006a; Oxfam, 2006b; SCUK, 2005a). The choice of how to distribute cash must reflect a programme’s objectives, targeting strategy, existing infrastructure for managing cash and security conditions.
- **Monitoring the impact of cash distributions requires gender sensitivity,** as decisions about how cash is spent and who makes that decision may create conflict within households. In their cash programme, Concern in Malawi used gender-specific techniques to discover how men and women spent the funds, including sometimes not in the best interests of their families (Concern, 2006).

Work Programmes

Both food and cash transfers in slow-onset disasters are often made in exchange for work. The pros and cons associated with cash for work (CFW) are more or less the same as in the case of

⁸ This section draws on Harvey (2007), WFP (2007a) and WFP (2006a), which are reviews of evaluations of cash-based emergency interventions. Other references are included here for specific information.

for food for work (FFW) (Harvey, 2007). Factors needed for success include high levels of community participation at all stages of design and implementation, appropriate technical guidance and quality assurance. Necessary relief cannot be withheld just because the quality of work is not up to standard. Therefore, any activity requiring a high standard of work is probably better as a complementary activity than as a pre-condition for receiving relief (URD, 2007; WFP, 2007b).

Work programmes also risk preventing poor households from pursuing their own productive activities. This is particularly difficult for women who often provide labour for CFW/FFW and are still required to do household chores, including caring for children. Because of this, an evaluation of CFW/FFW in Ethiopia strongly recommended limiting the required number of hours per day and days per person for an individual to work in order to receive their ration (DFID, 2006b).

Table 4 provides a breakdown of different types of possible interventions based on different livelihoods criteria, and may be used as the basis of a 'relevance checklist' for checking programmes against changing contexts over time.

Table 4: Analysis of interventions based on livelihoods criteria

Type of intervention	Criteria	Common emergency context	Advantages	Disadvantages
General food distribution	People are cut off from normal sources of food. Lack of food availability. Alternative ways of increasing access to food would take too long.	Acute emergencies. Large scale emergencies. Displacement.	Most readily available resource.	Tied food aid takes a long time to reach destination. High logistics requirements. Can undermine markets and production if food is locally available.
Food for work (FFW)	Lack of access to food. Lack of food availability. Labour potential. Infrastructure damaged. Security and access. Target population should not suffer acute food insecurity or high levels of malnutrition.	Slow-onset or recovery stage of crisis. Chronic food insecurity.	Easier to target than free food distribution. Restores community assets as well as providing food.	Small scale. Not everyone can work.
Cash grants	Food available and markets functioning. Risk of inflationary pressure is low.	Early stages of emergency or rehabilitation.	Cost efficient. Choice for beneficiaries. Quick way of meeting basic needs. Stimulates markets.	Risk of inflation. Cash may not be spent on intended programme objectives. Difficult to monitor. Difficult to target.
Cash for work (CFW)	Food available and markets functioning. Food insecurity result of loss of income, assets or employment. Risk of inflationary pressure is low. Security and access.	Recovery phase. Chronic food insecurity.	Choice. Creates community infrastructure. Stimulates markets. Stimulates recovery Easy to target.	Small scale. Not everyone can work. May interfere with livelihood strategies. High management requirements.
Vouchers	Essential commodities can be brought in by traders. Opportunities to make agreements with traders. Food availability and functioning markets.	Usually second phase response in acute emergencies.	Promotes purchase of local products. Can specify commodities. Commodity vouchers protect from inflation. Easy to monitor.	Risk of forgery. May create parallel economy. May need regular adjustment to protect from inflation.
Microfinance	Functioning markets and banks. Stable economy (no hyper-inflation). Skilled workforce.	Recovery stage of emergency. Relatively secure context. Home based populations or returnees.	Can be sustainable.	High management costs. Risk of default on loans.
Market infrastructure	Food insecurity is result of fragmented markets.	Both emergency and development contexts.	Can bring about long lasting change in people's access to markets.	Needs in-depth market analysis. Often done badly as part of FFW or CFW if focus is on providing food or cash.
Monetisation and subsidised sales	Local food prices volatile. Targeted at areas that face food deficits. Affected population still has some purchasing power. Direct distribution not possible because of insecurity.	Early stage of emergency.	No targeting. Potential for quick impact on large population.	Can have negative impact on markets if done when criteria are not met.
Seeds and tools	Food insecurity due to reduction or loss in crop production. Affected households lack seeds and tools. Lack of availability of seeds and tools. The lack of seeds/tools limits production. Local knowledge.	Recovery stage or protracted emergencies.	Re-establishes crop production. Strengthens agricultural systems in the longer term.	Requires knowledge of local seeds. Imported seeds may not be used.
Livestock support	Sales causes collapse in market prices. Deaths result from lack of pasture and/or water. Livestock disease. Restrictions to livestock movements. Local knowledge.	Depends on type of intervention but some livestock intervention can be implemented at all stages.	In line with people's own priorities, and thus likely to get high levels of community participation.	Can usually only be done on small scale.

Sources: Levine and Chastre (2004, July), Jaspars et al (2002, August), Crettl and Jaspars, Eds (2006).

Source: Jaspars (2006).

Sources of further information

- For more on food aid in emergencies, see: WFP (2003b)⁹ and World Bank (2005).¹⁰
- As part of the 2003 work in Malawi, ALNAP produced a manual on general food distribution programmes, covering all aspects of the programme and the whole 'distribution cycle': http://www.alnap.org/pdfs/other_studies/JEFAP_manual.pdf
- For more on the relationship between relief objectives and response options, see:

⁹ www.wfp.org/policies/Introduction/policy/.

¹⁰ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/SP-Discussion-papers/Safety-Nets-DP/0538.pdf>

- Jaspars (2006)¹¹
- For more information on cash programming, see: Harvey (2007), *Cash-based Responses in Emergencies*;¹² Oxfam (2006d), *Cash Transfer Programming in Emergencies*;¹³ SDC (2006), *Cash Workbook*¹⁴ and WFP (2006a), *Cash and Food Transfers: A Primer*.¹⁵

9: Social protection strategies

What is social protection and why is it relevant to high food prices?

Social Protection (SP) is an umbrella term used to describe a broad range of initiatives and transfers intended to reduce the economic and social vulnerability of the poor and food-insecure. Comprehensive social protection and food and nutrition initiatives are required to meet the short- and medium-term needs of the poor. Examples include minimum-income guarantees and cash-for-work programmes to help poor people survive shocks and meet basic needs.

Social protection strategies are likely to be most effective in countries like Ethiopia, Bangladesh or North Korea, where sizeable portions of the population face a chronic, but predictable inability to produce or access sufficient quality and quantity of food. In these situations, lifecycle shocks or risk stemming from the combination of regular, localised climatic shocks, ill-functioning markets, insufficient production, and/or food-price destabilisation can worsen an already challenged capacity to cope and can tip the balance against those who were barely managing. Instruments that provide a seasonal safety net coupled with other options can offer a 'livelihood package' that can meet immediate needs while building a buffer for the future (Maxwell et al, 2008).

Instruments to offer a safety net include employment-guarantee schemes or conditional cash transfers dependent on school or health-clinic attendance, for example. Other options can include micro-credit (to build household assets), food for work or cash for work (targeted to building community assets), asset transfers (e.g. revolving livestock funds), or production support (fertiliser subsidies).

More detailed information

Well-targeted and appropriate measures are specific to the type of risk and food insecurity in any given circumstances. This implies that social protection programmes ideally identify major risks and population groups facing those risks, and develop an appropriate response, one that typically requires disaggregating the response to different portions of the population. For instance, the Ethiopian PSNP gives either cash or food, depending on market infrastructure in the region where the programme is being implemented. It distinguishes between those households with productive labour and those without. It is also meant to link those lacking assets to asset-promoting livelihood packages that will enable them to graduate from the regular need for cash or food assistance.

Predictable and timely resource transfer is a critical precondition to enabling households to use resources effectively. They can then maximise consumption and invest in riskier activities with higher returns that may boost their asset base and free them from poverty traps, reducing chronic food insecurity.

¹¹ www.enonline.net/fex/27/supplement27.pdf

¹² www.odi.org.uk/hpg/cash_vouchers.html

¹³ <http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/Oxfam/display.asp?isbn=0855985631>

¹⁴ www.sdc-cashprojects.ch/en/Home/SDC_Cash_Workbook

¹⁵ www.wfp.org/policies/Introduction/other/Documents/pdf/OP18_Cash_and_Food_Transfers_Eng%2007.pdf

Governments should manage and implement social protection, which is ideally not managed by the external humanitarian assistance community. Social protection interventions do typically require multi-sectoral collaboration, which makes their cohesive coordination challenging, but domestic institutional responsibility for social protection implies that there is a political commitment and measure of accountability to reducing transitory and chronic food insecurity by addressing chronic problems (Tufts, 2008). In this context, international agencies need to adapt how they traditionally do business. One substantive area has to do with becoming better equipped to analyse and influence national policy, acquiring new skills and the understanding that policy processes are slow, longer-term and often largely outside the direct control of the organisation. Despite the fact that NGOs and other humanitarian actors are often better positioned than governments to deliver services efficiently, their operations are generally small-scale and are driven by funding cycles with shorter time horizons than the principles of social protection demand. It has been claimed that NGO involvement in implementing social protection has masked the low capacity that many governments have to deliver these programmes, and suggests that NGO involvement should be geared toward facilitation rather than direct implementation. In addition to increasing their role in lobbying, advocacy, and capacity-building, there is also a role for NGOs to participate in 'social mobilization', by engaging with civil society to hold states accountable to their social contracts and monitor the extent to which social transfers are carried out as, and to whom, they are intended (Tufts, 2008).

How can humanitarian agencies best contribute?

Some countries, such as India and South Africa, already have social protection programmes in place that they can expand to meet new and emerging needs. However, countries that do not have such programmes will not be able to create them rapidly enough to make a difference in the current food-price situation. They may feel forced to rely on cruder measures like export bans and import subsidies (IFPRI, 2008a).

In this context, international humanitarian agencies could help by strengthening government capacity or by taking on roles that governments would ideally be filling. Unlike other humanitarian approaches to dealing with chronic and transitory food insecurity, such as 'building back better', 'saving lives and livelihoods' or 'post-disaster rehabilitation', for which the crisis itself is the starting point, social protection requires determining *in advance* of a crisis which segments of a population are at risk from what sources. It also requires intervening with mechanisms that are able to avert or mitigate a crisis before it occurs. This implies a redirection of funding away from mechanisms and institutions that are typically engaged to deal with emergency response or, in some cases, a different role for humanitarian assistance altogether (Maxwell et al, 2008).

A key challenge to humanitarian programming in this area will be how to prioritise, target and distribute what is likely to be a less-than-adequate amount of assistance. Information strategies, contingencies and scenarios need to be supported by sufficiently flexible adaptive management frameworks. It will be necessary to look for novel transfers and think about how business and the private sector could be incorporated in social transfers.

Choosing and implementing social transfer interventions

Table 5 shows how different social protection instruments are appropriate for different sources of vulnerability (see also Annex 3, which shows vulnerabilities by livelihood group). This highlights the diversity of vulnerabilities that might be expected, and suggests that a mix of different approaches will be needed in different settings.

Table 5: Source of vulnerability and suitability of social transfer instruments

Source of vulnerability and suitability of social transfer instruments			
Source of vulnerability	Benefit	Modality	Examples of types of instrument
Chronic poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash • Food 	Direct support Public works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional/unconditional cash/food transfers • Microfinance
Personal shock (e.g. illness, disability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash 	Direct support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social welfare grants • Pensions
Lack of access to key livelihood inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash • Inputs • Assets 	Conditional transfers (eg, must have land to utilise inputs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional cash transfers • 'Starter Packs' (farmers) • Land reform (women) • Restocking (pastoralists)
Market failures (e.g. price seasonality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash • Subsidies • Food 	Direct support Public works Subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfers • Food stamps/vouchers • Food price subsidies • Employment guarantees
Inadequate uptake of basic services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food • Cash • Waivers 	Conditional transfers (eg. conditional on attendance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School feeding (education) • Conditional transfers (health) • Fee waivers (education, health)

(RHVP, 2007)

Plans to construct social transfer programmes around the source of vulnerability may be constrained by two practical limitations. First, the type of social transfer benefit (food, cash or other inputs) is often determined by what is available, rather than by what is needed. The second constraint is the lack of enabling environments: in some countries, or parts of some countries, it may not be possible to give the most appropriate social transfer, or to deliver it effectively. For example, where markets do not function well, the introduction of cash-based transfers would make little impact on improving access to food. Conversely, in situations where markets do function well, the use of food-based transfers would often undermine the operation of the private sector. (For more information on this, see above in Idea 3 on markets and Idea 8 on cash and food).

The work of the Food Economy Group suggests ten key good principles to consider in the implementation of social protection approaches – these are outlined in Annex 10.

There is growing concern about the implications of rising food prices for cash-based social protection given the eroding value of cash transfers in the face of food-price inflation. Box 12 shows an example of this in relation to Ethiopia. According to leading food security expert Stephen Devereux: 'The poorer you are, the higher the proportion of incremental income that is allocated to food, and this will necessarily rise even higher if food prices rise and cash transfers do not adjust accordingly'.¹⁶

While some view price inflation as an argument for a shift back to food transfers, others see it as a strong argument not against cash transfers but in favour of index-linking them. According to one analyst, '[agencies] should be encouraging governments to set up simple, basic national cash-transfer programmes, which provide a pre-existing vehicle that can be quickly broadened, expanded, or increased in value by donors and/or private-sector insurers, based on index-linking and/or trigger events'.¹⁷ Index-linking cash transfers to prices of staple foods would ensure that constant access is maintained, whatever the cost of food. However, this requires governments or donors to take on the price risk that poor people face all the time, and it demands flexibility in planning and budgeting that governments and donors might find daunting. Agencies that budget

¹⁶ Comment by Stephen Devereux at a recent debate (RHVP/Wahenga RHVP, 2008).

¹⁷ Comment by Nicholas Freeland (RHVP/Wahenga RHVP, 2008).

multimillion-dollar programmes two or three years ahead will struggle to double their budgets after the programme has started, in the face of unpredicted food-price inflation.¹⁸

Box 12: Ethiopian government's Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP)

The PSNP was introduced in 2005 as an attempt to free Ethiopia from dependence on emergency food-aid appeals and to reduce household vulnerability. The programme targets the (up to) 14 million Ethiopians in any given year who suffer predictable food deprivation even during periods of record harvest. The PSNP provides support, in the form of both food and cash for work (depending on market infrastructure), offering guaranteed labour and income-/food-earning opportunity to households with productive members. Labour-deficit households qualify for free transfers in the form of direct cash or food support.

Some work of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) on the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia found that the proportion of households (in a relatively small sample in just 8 districts) receiving 'cash only' had fallen from 15 per cent in 2006 to 2 per cent in 2008, while households receiving 'food only' increased from 19 to 67 per cent. The proportion of households saying that they would prefer to get 'food only' if they had a choice also increased, from 54 to 84 per cent, when the expectation was that cash transfers would gradually displace food aid, as markets strengthened through the PSNP. Food-price inflation is obviously a major challenge for cash transfer programmes, and the scale of inflation during the current food-price crisis was unpredicted.

Some analysts have suggested that, in certain contexts, a swing back to food transfers might reflect agency manipulation rather than a genuine change in beneficiary preferences, although the latter is plausible in any situation where adjustments in cash-transfer levels are not keeping pace with food-price rises in local markets, or where transaction costs to buy food and other essentials are high. Food prices in rural Ethiopia have risen by 250 per cent in the last 2–3 years, while PSNP cash transfers have been raised by just 33 per cent. Where transfer recipients are offered a choice, and the purchasing power of cash is falling dramatically, it is hardly surprising that food will be preferred.

Source: Maxwell et al (2008).

This reinforces the need for good livelihoods and needs analysis as well as for conceptual clarity. According to Bernd Schubert:

*In this context we should not mix the cash-versus-food discussion in the area of short-term humanitarian aid with the cash-versus-food discussion with regard to institutionalised social transfers. These are different scenarios and what may make sense there may not make sense here. We should also use the terms that define our target group more consistently and not mix extreme poverty, vulnerability and chronic poverty as if all this is more or less the same.*¹⁹

Sources of further information

- <http://www.wahenga.net/> is the website of the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme, and one of the most comprehensive resources on social protection. The programme works in six southern African countries - Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

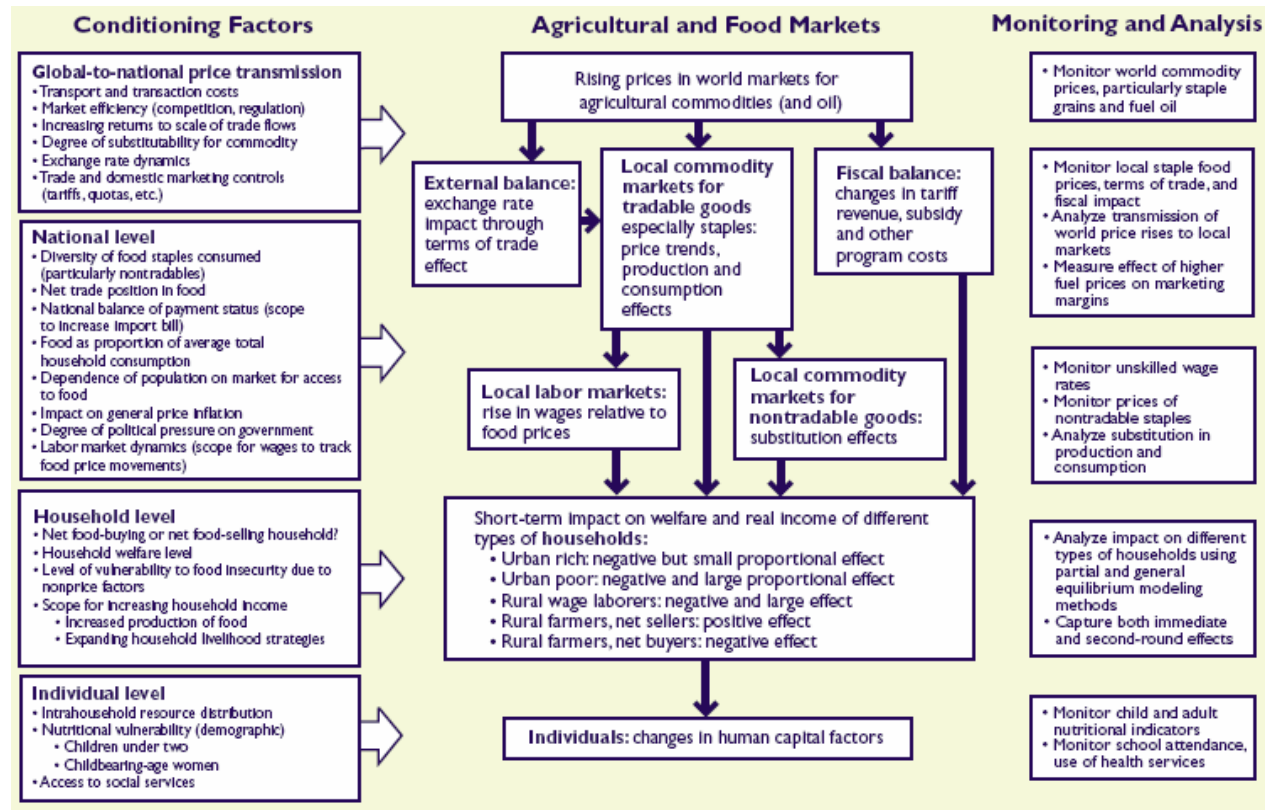
¹⁸ Comment by Stephen Devereux (RHVP/Wahenga RHVP, 2008).

¹⁹ Bernd Schubert speaking at RHVP/Wahenga (2008).

ANNEXES: Detailed tables and boxes referred to in the paper

Annex 1: Conceptual framework for understanding the welfare impact of food crises

Referred to on page 5, in the context of understanding the impact of rising food prices on poor people



Source: IFPRI, 2008

Annex 2: High Risk Countries

Referred to on page 5, in the context of developing countries that are especially vulnerable due to a combination of high levels of chronic hunger, and high dependence on imports of petroleum products and on imports of major grains (rice, wheat and maize) for domestic consumption

Countries	Petroleum % imported ¹	Major grains % imported ²	% under-nourishment ³
Eritrea	100	88	75
Burundi	100	12	66
Comoros	100	80	60
Tajikistan	99	43	56
Sierra Leone	100	53	51
Liberia	100	62	50
Zimbabwe	100	2	47
Ethiopia	100	22	46
Haiti	100	72	46
Zambia	100	4	46
Central African Republic	100	25	44
Mozambique	100	20	44
Tanzania	100	14	44
Guinea-Bissau	100	55	39
Madagascar	100	14	38
Malawi	100	7	35
Cambodia	100	5	33
Korea, DPR	98	45	33
Rwanda	100	29	33
Botswana	100	76	32
Niger	100	82	32
Kenya	100	20	31

¹Source: Energy Information Administration *International Energy Annual 2005*, Washington DC, US. Covers crude and refined petroleum products.

²Source: FAOSTAT, *Archives Commodity Balance Sheets*. Average 2001-03 for wheat, rice and maize.

³Source: FAOSTAT, Food Security Statistics, Prevalence of undernourishment in total population (2002-2004 preliminary): www.fao.org/es/ess/faostat/foodsecurity

Countries that are net importers of petroleum products and major grains, as a percentage of domestic apparent consumption, and ranked by prevalence of under-nourishment
Source: FAO (2008).

This table shows that countries such as Eritrea, Niger, Comoros, Botswana, Haiti and Liberia are especially vulnerable due to a very high level of all three risk factors. Relief programmes in any of these 22 high-risk countries are especially likely to face programming challenges as a result of food-price rises.

Annex 3: Illustration of vulnerabilities and impacts by livelihood groups (July 2008 Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya)

Referred to on page 5, 15 and 34, in the context of the potential impacts on poor people varying by livelihood group

POTENTIAL IMPACTS BY GROUP	VULNERABILITY CONSIDERATIONS BY GROUP
<p>AGRICULTURAL HOUSEHOLDS Net sellers may benefit from higher prices due to increased income and purchasing power. Net buyers will likely face decreased food access due to a relative increase in their expenditure on food as a proportion of their income. However, if input costs (and other costs of production and transportation) are increasing even more, the net impact on both net sellers' and net buyers' household food access could be negative.</p>	<p>The different types of households have different vulnerabilities to soaring food prices. Three general types were identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 commercial/surplus farmers 2 subsistence farmers 3 marginal farmers (producing insufficient to meet their own food-consumption needs and relying significantly on the market to meet their food needs).
<p>AGRO-PASTORALISTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing agricultural input prices lead to a reduction in the amount of inputs purchased. • Households may receive better prices for the crops that are sold. • Reduced expenditures on health and other purchased services. • Reduced access to food and water. • Increased migration and school drop-out. • Men sent to find work and money, leading to an increased burden on women. • Reduced dietary diversity; possible increased dependence on food aid. 	<p>Due to the mixed production systems within the agro-pastoral livelihood, the following general needs were identified for vulnerable agro-pastoral households to meet their basic needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water • fodder • animal health • seeds • tools • crop diversification • school feeding programmes • cash transfers.
<p>PASTORALISTS If food prices increase relatively more than the prices of livestock and livestock products, the impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in essential non-food expenditures • unknown effects on livestock market; demand for livestock products may increase as they become relatively cheaper than food, or demand may decrease as overall household purchasing power is reduced • decreased asset base, as more livestock have to be sold to meet food consumption needs • increased drop-out from the pastoral livelihood, as migration is left in favour of settlement to seek alternative sources of income • changes in herd structure • increased malnutrition as food access is reduced • additionally, decreased dietary diversity due to changes in diet and substituting more expensive items with cheap ones. • increased civil insecurity due to increased competition for natural resources • decreased use of privatised animal health services, leading to increased incidence of animal disease. 	<p>Pastoralist households tend to be more vulnerable (relative to those with other livelihoods) because they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not produce cereal to buffer the impact of or benefit from the increasing prices • are significantly affected by drought • have fewer income alternatives and coping mechanisms • are less access to markets due to remote location. <p>However, pastoralists also have the following advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • big herds that can be used to buffer the impact of increasing prices • the structure of the pastoral asset base, which is designed to be flexible • a traditional social system of mutual support.
<p>URBAN POOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced quantity/quality of food due to reduced purchasing power. • Increase in health, sanitation, and hygiene problems as households prioritise expenditure on food over water, latrines 	<p>Additionally, urban poor communities have not traditionally been targeted by the humanitarian community. Therefore, relatively limited capacity exists to support poor households</p>

<p>and health services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rise in insecurity/rioting.• Engagement in negative coping strategies such as crime and prostitution.• Increased household debt.• Withdrawal of children from school.• Increased pressure for social support or gifts to extended family.• Influx of people into urban centres looking for income-generating opportunities, resulting in rising unemployment.	<p>engaged in the urban livelihood in the short term.</p>
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Annex 4: Ten actions developing countries should take

(drawn from *Double-Edged Prices*, Oxfam Briefing Paper, October 2008)

Referred to on page 6, in the context of potential upside of the food prices, and page 24 in the context of the need for better coordination and partnerships with national governments

Poor-country governments, with the support of donors, should:

- Increase public spending on agriculture to generate supply in the short term, and provide support to smallholder farmers in the longer term;
- Properly target farming sector expenditure, both in order to provide the public services required and to reach small-scale producers;
- Invest in social protection programmes to enable citizens to meet their basic needs and protect their livelihoods from potential threats;
- Consider contributing to national or regional strategic food reserves to counteract food shortages and market volatility. Assistance programmes should encourage local communities to design community-based food reserves;
- Adopt trade measures that protect small-scale producers, strategic agricultural sectors, and emerging companies;
- Avoid resorting to trade measures (such as export bans) that could exacerbate the crisis or undermine long-term development prospects;
- Support the creation and strengthening of trade unions, producer organisations, and women's groups in particular, in order that they can take part in the design, implementation, and monitoring of food and agricultural policies, negotiate collectively to bring down the prices of inputs purchased, and obtain better wages and prices for their products;
- Promote access to assets and services, particularly for women farmers. Access to land, water, seeds, fertilisers, technology, loans, infrastructure, and energy is often insufficient, insecure, or too expensive;
- Address the problems of waged agricultural workers, developing and enforcing labour legislation for rural workers and establishing guaranteed employment programmes for people who remain unemployed out of season;
- Build community-level resilience to climate change to ensure that poor producers can benefit from higher food prices and both adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In addition, rich countries, the World Bank and other donors should:

- Coordinate their action and funding through a United Nations-led mechanism, building on the work done by the High Level Task Force on food prices.
- Increase investment in development assistance to agriculture in developing countries, particularly for smallholders.
- Stop pressing for rapid liberalisation and opposing adequate safeguards for developing countries in multilateral, regional, and bilateral trade negotiations and agreements.
- Reform their agriculture and trade policies that permit dumping, restrict policy space, and hinder growth in developing countries, so that countries can support their own agricultural development and in turn ensure food security.

Annex 5: The Comprehensive Framework for Action

Referred to on page 7, in the context of what is being done by whom, with mentions to the CFA throughout the paper.

<p>MEETING IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS</p> <p>Objective: Improve access to food and nutrition support and take immediate steps to increase food availability</p> <p>Timing: Actions must be taken now for immediate results</p> <p>Outcomes and actions</p> <p>1.1 Emergency food assistance, nutrition interventions and safety nets enhanced and made more accessible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that emergency needs are fully met ▪ Protect basic consumption needs of the poor ▪ Scale-up nutritional support ▪ Support management of under-nutrition ▪ Promote school feeding ▪ Adjust pensions and other existing social protection programmes ▪ Allow free flow of assistance ▪ Ensure that local purchases of food for humanitarian purposes are exempt from export restrictions ▪ Explore possibilities to establish humanitarian food reserves <p>1.2 Smallholder farmer food production boosted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide productivity-enhancing safety nets ▪ Rehabilitate rural and agricultural infrastructure ▪ Reduce post-harvest crop losses and improve village-level stocks ▪ Remove artificial constraints to domestic trade throughout the food chain in order to link small farmers to markets ▪ Improve animal health services <p>1.3 Trade and tax policy adjusted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review trade and taxation policy options ▪ Use strategic grain reserves to lower prices ▪ Avoid generalised food subsidies ▪ Minimise use of export restrictions ▪ Reduce restrictions on use of stocks ▪ Reduce import tariffs ▪ Improve efficiency of trade facilitation ▪ Temporarily reduce VAT and other taxes <p>1.4 Macro-economic implications managed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold down core inflation and inflation expectations ▪ Assess the impact on the balance of payments ▪ Mobilise external support to finance additional food imports ▪ Ensure adequate levels of foreign exchange reserves ▪ Cost all fiscal measures in response to food crisis 	<p>BUILDING LONGER-TERM RESILIENCE AND CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY</p> <p>Objective: Strengthen food and nutrition security in the longer run by addressing the underlying factors driving the food crisis</p> <p>Timing: Actions must be phased in now for durable results</p> <p>Outcomes and actions</p> <p>2.1 Social protection systems expanded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen capacity to design and implement social protection policies and programmes ▪ Move towards more efficient programmes ▪ Identify alternatives to unconditional assistance ▪ Improve the quality and diversity of foods <p>2.2 Smallholder farmer growth production sustained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the enabling policy framework ▪ Stimulate public/private investment in agriculture ▪ Ensure secure access to and better management of natural resources, including land, water, and biodiversity ▪ Invest in agricultural research ▪ Improve rural infrastructure ▪ Ensure sustained access to competitive, transparent and private-sector-led markets for food produce and quality inputs ▪ Support development of producer organisations ▪ Strengthen access of smallholders and other food-chain actors to financial and risk-management instruments <p>2.3 International food markets improved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce/eliminate agricultural trade distortions in higher-income countries ▪ Rapidly complete the Doha Round of trade negotiations consistent with developmental focus ▪ Implement 'Aid for Trade' ▪ Strengthen oversight of markets to limit speculation ▪ Build capacity for markets to improve their ability to meet needs of lower-income countries ▪ Support regional or global stocks sharing <p>2.4 International biofuel consensus developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare a common reference framework ▪ Develop biofuel guidelines and safeguard measures ▪ Re-assess biofuel targets, subsidies and tariffs ▪ Facilitate private investments in biofuel production ▪ Promote research and development, knowledge exchange and capacity building
<p>3.1 Global information and monitoring systems strengthened</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish better coordination of information systems ▪ Carry out comprehensive assessments and monitoring ▪ Undertake impact analysis ▪ Conduct health and nutrition assessments ▪ Analyse policy options and programmatic approaches ▪ Review contingency plans and early warning systems 	

Sections 1.1, 1.2 and 3.1 (highlighted in grey) are of special relevance for relief efforts

Annex 6: What is being done? Selected examples

Referred to on page 7, in the context of the range of actions being taken by different organisations.

<p>WFP: Over the first four months of 2008, the World Food Programme (WFP) paid an average of US\$430 for a metric tonne of wheat, compared to US\$207 for the same period of 2007, an increase of 108 per cent.²⁰ It appealed for financial aid as the rises rendered the original budget (of nearly US\$3 billion) inadequate. US\$1.2 billion in additional assistance has been provided to support WFP assistance programmes in 62 countries worldwide affected by the food crisis.</p>
<p>UNOCHA/CERF: Of a reserve of US\$100 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a humanitarian fund managed by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on behalf of the wider humanitarian community, for food-related emergency response projects (food, agriculture, health, nutrition, and logistics), US\$65 million has already been allocated.</p>
<p>UNICEF Enhanced nutrition assessments and interventions have been enabled through United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) allocation of an additional US\$50 million from its regular resources to its programmes of cooperation with 41 developing countries facing nutrition insecurity among children and vulnerable groups.</p>
<p>FAO Procurement and distribution of seeds, fertilisers and other inputs has been carried out in 54 countries under the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP). FAO is also urging governments and the international community to implement measures in support of poor countries hard hit by food price increases, specifically to provide small farmers with improved access to inputs like seeds and fertiliser to increase local crop production (RHVP/Wahenga brief, 2008).</p>
<p>IFAD Support has been provided from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for smallholder farmers to access inputs and related services rapidly through a reallocation of US\$200 million, with programmes in 14 countries being scaled up. In addition, under its ongoing investment portfolio, IFAD finances food-production-related activities (crops, livestock and aquaculture) in 65 countries. It will further scale up and fast-track these activities upon countries' request.</p>
<p>World Bank The World Bank Food Crisis Response Programme has provided US\$1.2 billion of rapid financing for expansion of safety nets, agricultural input distribution, financing of critical imports, and budget support to countries affected by the crisis, together with reprogramming of existing loans. Short-term financing requirements for safety nets and agriculture (mainly assistance for seeds and fertilisers) in the 50 countries assessed by the World Bank are estimated at US\$3.5 billion (about US\$1 billion for safety net and budget support and US\$2.5 billion for short-term support to agriculture). As of July 2008, support to a total of 26 countries has been agreed of which grant funding to ten highly vulnerable countries has already been or is in the process of being approved by the World Bank Board.</p>
<p>IMF Additional balance-of-payments support is being provided under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) existing Poverty Reduction and Growth Facilities (PRGF) in ten countries, amounting to US\$180 million (as of 7 July 2008). Further increases are under discussion and likely in another four countries for about US\$79 million. Discussions on additional financing are being held with several other countries. The IMF is also reviewing the modalities of its Exogenous Shocks Facility to enhance its accessibility to low-income countries facing additional balance-of-payments financing requirements.</p>
<p>NEPAD and the African Development Bank are calling for an increase in funding and a renewed focus on agricultural investment and water management in Africa, including irrigation, drainage and rainwater harvesting (RHVP/Wahenga brief, 2008).</p>

²⁰ www.wfp.org

The African Union (AU) is calling on international stakeholders, like the World Bank, the IMF and the United Nations to assist Africa in all possible ways to cope with the impact of the soaring food prices. Furthermore, through its ongoing 'Livingstone-2' process, the AU is encouraging members to include social protection programmes in their National Development Plans (RHVP/Wahenga brief, 2008).

IFPRI is lobbying in the immediate term for borders to be kept open to trade, increasing global research in agriculture and developing more special programmes to feed young children (RHVP/Wahenga brief, 2008).

African governments According to the World Bank, some countries are initiating or expanding social protection programmes, such as: cash transfer programmes to vulnerable groups, food-for-work programmes, or emergency food-aid distribution. Several countries have lowered tariffs and other taxes on key staples, in order to provide some relief to consumers. In contrast, other countries have put in place export bans and further restrictions on trade. In South Africa, adjustments to the amounts paid in social grants to the poor are planned in order to mitigate the impact of rising food prices. In Zambia, following the recent floods and in spite of a large exportable surplus of maize in the 2007/08 marketing year (May/April), the government has reinstated its export ban for any new contracts. The Malawian government has recently imposed an export ban on all maize except shipments to Zimbabwe. Declining domestic supply was quoted as the primary reason. The Malawian government has also done a more to promote food self-sufficiency through its Fertiliser Subsidy Policy.²¹ In Zimbabwe, the government continues to control imports of maize, wheat and sorghum, which are sold at subsidised prices. Although the increase in import prices has been partially mitigated in 2008 by an early import contract of 400,000 tons of maize from Malawi, domestic consumer-price inflation drastically erodes the consumer's purchasing power.

International NGOs, including CARE, Save the Children and Oxfam, are factoring higher food prices into the work they do at many different levels. For example, Oxfam is employing a broad range of tools adapted to local conditions including food distributions, cash or voucher handouts, buying food locally, de-stocking livestock in times of drought, and other interventions aimed at reducing people's vulnerability to market fluctuations (e.g. support to grain banks) (Oxfam, 2008). CARE is supporting the development of 'keyhole gardens' to improve food production, even in peri-urban environments. These are round gardens of about two metres in diameter and raised to waist-height to make them easy for the sick and elderly to work. Inside, the garden-beds are layered with tin cans, mulch and ash which together provide the nutrients to make the gardens extraordinarily productive.²²

The World Trade Organisation says that developing countries need to use their power to advocate with the World Bank and the IMF to refocus aid flows to improve supply in agriculture; and, in the short-term, developed countries should assist WFP with more cash to provide emergency food aid to countries worst hit (RHVP/Wahenga brief, 2008).

²¹ http://www.networkideas.org/news/dec2007/news10_%20Malawi.htm

²² See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7432972.stm>

Annex 7: High-level meetings on food-price rises

Referred to on page 7, in the context of key features of the 2008 high level summit meetings

Rome Summit: ‘High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy’ opened at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy on 3 June 2008. Following significant discussion and negotiations, the Conference concluded with the adoption by acclamation of a declaration calling on the international community to increase assistance for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and those that are most negatively affected by high food prices. While many analyses were presented, there was general agreement that agriculture would once again play a prominent role on the international agenda, and that increased agricultural investment and enhanced agricultural productivity would be crucial.


The declaration emphasises two sets of actions:

- 1 In the short term: continue to provide food aid and social security plus budget support and other relief, such as on debts; promote farming, for example with inputs, and look to integrate in international trade.
- 2 In the medium and long terms: encourage biodiversity, investment in agricultural science and technology, liberalise trade and remove policy distortions, think hard about biofuels.

CFA High Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis: Comprehensive Framework for Action. On 28 April 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General established a Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis under his chairmanship and composed of the heads of the United Nations specialised agencies, funds and programmes, Bretton Woods institutions and relevant parts of the UN Secretariat. The Task Force is chaired by the UN Secretary-General, with FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf as Vice-Chairman. The Secretary-General appointed UN Under-Secretary-General John Holmes as Task Force Coordinator and Assistant Secretary-General David Nabarro as Deputy Coordinator. The primary aim of the Task Force is to promote a unified response to the global food price challenge, including by facilitating the creation of a prioritised plan of action and coordinating its implementation.

G8 meeting, July 2008, Hokkaido: Prime Minister Fukuda stated at the outset that: both immediate response and medium-to-long-term policies were indispensable to address the issue of rising food prices; the G8 should set out a vision for the international community to respond further to this crisis, as the G8 was providing the majority of assistance in this field and accounting for a large share of the world’s food supply and demand. To this end, the G8 would take actions including the establishment of the G8 Experts Group. Responding to this remark, the leaders discussed various factors contributing to rising food prices, and measures to tackle the problem. With regard to rising food prices, the leaders shared the view that they should agree a coordinated and coherent action to address this issue, which was severely damaging the poor. They agreed that aid and investment in the agricultural sector, as well as domestic measures to boost output, should be promoted. In the context of development, it was emphasised that support for smallholders should be prioritised. Furthermore, the leaders discussed the removal of export restrictions, the sustainable production and use of biofuels, and the need to address the influence of speculative capital.

Annex 8. Components of Food Security Information System, Frequency of Analysis, and Major Questions Addressed, Drawn from Maxwell et al (forthcoming 2008) Referred to on page 10 in the context of information for better humanitarian responses, and page 13 in the context of better understanding of livelihoods.

Component	Logical Sequence	Frequency of Analysis	Information Categories/Questions Addressed	
1. Baseline Vulnerability Assessment		Infrequent (Every 5 years, or when context changes)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the basic livelihoods of groups? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are known or likely hazards: natural and environmental, social, economic and political? • What is the likelihood of these occurring, and what indicators would predict? • Who are the most vulnerable groups? • What capacities, services and resources (physical, human, social) exist to mitigate vulnerability? • What are coping and risk minimization strategies? • Baseline information against which to analyse trends 	
2. Early Warning		Continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator trend analysis: is there a problem shaping up? • Where and how quickly is it developing? • What are the geographic dimensions of the problem? • In what areas should an in-depth assessment be concentrated? 	
3. Emergency Needs Assessment		As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is nature and dimensions of the problem? • How long is it going to last? • Who are the most vulnerable groups? • What and how much is needed; what is the best response? • To what extent is local coping capacity and provision of services overwhelmed? • What are major logistical and resource considerations? 	
<< Programmatic Intervention (based on information generated, but not part of Information System <i>per se</i>) >>				
4. Project Monitoring		Continuous (While programme is on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are inputs accounted for (logistical accounting)? • Are outputs achieved (end-use monitoring)? • Pipeline analysis: is the pipeline "flow" adequate for meeting upcoming requirements? 	
5. Impact Assessment		Regular Intervals (While programme is ongoing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the intervention achieving the intended result? • What adjustments are necessary (response, quantity, targeting)? 	
6. Context Monitoring		Continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the possibilities for exit, recovery, or transition for longer-term responses? • What are institutional capacities and vulnerabilities? • What are the risks of transition? • Does situation require re-assessment? 	
7. Program Evaluation and Lessons Learned	Periodic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can overall programme (information system, preparedness, response) be improved? • Are humanitarian principles being upheld by programmes • What lessons can be learned from experience and mistakes? 		

Annex 9: Market Analysis Decision-making tree

Referred to on page 17, in the context of the key questions on markets which are of specific importance for emergency-response planners and managers.

1. Which markets are critical to meeting people's needs?

- An assessment of people's urgent basic needs and likely vulnerabilities as a result of the emergency.
- Identification of markets which were (or are) most relevant in meeting these basic needs or mitigating vulnerabilities.
- Identification of markets on which people's livelihoods were most dependent in the longer term (considering both input and output markets).

2. Was this specific market working well before the price rises?

- A mapping of the actors (market structure) and their roles in this critical market 'system' before the emergency.
- Information about other supporting functions and rules/institutions that were important factors in this market's performance.
- Data on the volumes and prices at different points in the supply chain, and times of year (seasons)? Also indications of how integrated with neighbouring markets they were.
- An assessment of the competitiveness of price-setting behaviour.
- An analysis of how affected households interacted with this critical market before the emergency (i.e. access, percentage of their needs met, substitution options, seasonal factors, financial relationships).

3. Is this specific market likely to respond well to higher demand now?

- An assessment of how the emergency has disrupted the structure, institutions and supporting functions of this market.
- An assessment of how the emergency has affected the way in which households interact with this market (including accessibility).
- Data about volumes and prices, compared to before, or compared to spatially distant areas.
- Analysis of the expectations, incentives and capabilities of traders, suppliers and importers to bring in sufficient food, goods, etc. from neighbouring markets.
- Estimates of how steeply prices are therefore likely to rise if demand is stimulated (the shape of the local market supply curve).
- Identification of key market indicators that can be readily monitored to detect market responses to changes in demand.

4. Can the specific causes of market failure be rapidly resolved?

- A description of the most significant bottlenecks, constraints or other factors underlying the market's inability to respond well to higher demand.
- Proposals about what interventions would be effective in tackling these market constraints, and practicable for agencies to implement.
- Estimates of how quickly and how thoroughly these solutions would work.
- Identification of key market indicators that can be readily monitored to detect market responses to interventions.

Annex 10: Ten key lessons for social protection approaches

Referred to on page 35, in the context of good principles to consider in the implementation of social protection

<p>1) Start with a stock-take of all existing expenditures targeted at the poor and the hungry (i.e. on and off budget; government, donor and NGO; including food aid and subsidies). Identify what works and determine why. Look for programmes to scale up or shut down. Learn lessons and base the future programme on that evidence.</p>
<p>2) Take the long view: social protection, like health and education, is an essential social service that requires sustained support and on-budget funding. Replace reactive short-term interventions with predictable long-term programmes.</p>
<p>3) Produce a shared national vision of where you want social protection to be in twenty years time and how it will relate to a wider development agenda, by facilitating a broad-based national debate on the right to social protection.</p>
<p>4) Develop a social protection framework which expresses that vision and maps out a progressive but feasible and pragmatic path for the establishment of a national social protection system; and get all stakeholders to sign up to it. Then take time to communicate this framework, and the thinking behind it, to the population at large, using the media and other channels.</p>
<p>5) Start small and then expand, as reducing the scope of an initially larger programme could be politically difficult. For example, set cash benefits initially at a low level so that they can be increased rather than reduced later; target smaller groups (for example using age criteria) first, and expand later.</p>
<p>6) Capitalise on the convergence around social protection: many different interest groups share a common agenda in advocating for social protection (e.g. the elderly, children, disabled people, those with HIV/AIDS), so governments should coordinate programmes with the whole range of stakeholders, not simply one or two social groups.</p>
<p>7) Don't confuse the 'entry point' with the 'exit point': your initial reason for opening a dialogue may be hunger or OVC, but that doesn't mean your programme needs to be confined to that focus, or that you cannot change your priorities later. There are many broader programmes that may be more effective and more sustainable (e.g. child benefits, pensions, universal transfers).</p>
<p>8) Enlist the support of donors and NGOs, making it clear that it is time to stop piloting and pursuing separate agendas, but rather to start formulating and implementing, together, comprehensive national programmes.</p>
<p>9) Involve beneficiaries and their communities as active partners in the design of social protection initiatives; respect their preferences, and implement only programmes that will make a meaningful difference to their lives. Don't consult only with the men.</p>
<p>10) Involve the private sector in areas where it can assist effectively, such as logistics, distribution, storage, wholesaling/retailing, financial services, information systems; be transparent and consistent in these dealings, and acknowledge the sector's need for recognition and/or remuneration.</p>

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