BRIDGING THE GAP:

A GUIDE TO IMPROVING HUMANITARIAN PRACTICE TO SUPPORT LONG-TERM FOOD SECURITY

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HUMANITARIAN COALITION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Modern emergency interventions are highly effective at saving the lives and alleviating the suffering of people affected by humanitarian disasters. Humanitarian projects in the food security sector are designed within a framework of established humanitarian principles and practitioners from both humanitarian and development backgrounds agree that they are particularly proficient in responding to rapid-onset crises.

Recent large-scale disasters that resulted in wide-spread food insecurity have posed a highly complex set of new challenges. Events such as the East Africa famine in 2011 and the 2012 drought crisis in the Sahel took place in a context of chronic food insecurity in regions that suffer from cyclical crises. They raise important questions about how humanitarian responses can not only achieve short-term goals but also complement ongoing long-term efforts to improve food security.

These guidelines provide recommendations to humanitarian practitioners who intervene during acute phases of chronic food insecurity. They intend to contribute to the improvement of humanitarian practice by pointing out strategies to bridge an existing gap between short-term humanitarian programming and longer-term development objectives. Based on interviews and focus group discussions with experienced project staff involved in the 2012 Sahel drought response, this document addresses a number of features of humanitarian interventions that hamper the support of long-term food security objectives. These features include the time pressure that typically characterizes emergency interventions, the frequent lack of government capacities in intervention zones, restrictive donor funding criteria, insufficient beneficiary involvement in humanitarian activities, and a lack of intra- and inter-agency coordination.

Drawing on a depth of knowledge from both humanitarian and development actors, this document introduces recommendations to overcome the gap between short- and long-term objectives in food-related interventions. They are grouped into four categories related to different facets of emergency interventions:

COORDINATION

Coordination is essential in bridging the gap between short-term activities and long-term objectives. Most importantly, it calls for the **harmonization** and **alignment** of humanitarian interventions with ongoing food security activities. Harmonization ensures that short- and long-term interventions among multiple actors with different mandates complement each other. Alignment requires that agencies coordinate their activities with partner countries' governments and their development strategies.

Coordination also comprises the recommendation that complex crises are best addressed in **joint and multi-sectoral approaches**, which link humanitarian food security projects with other types of interventions and call for cluster management approaches in regions that lack sufficient government capacities and national coordination mechanisms.

In order to support long-term food security objectives, humanitarian practitioners must connect with other stakeholders in their intervention zone and **share assessments and previous results** with them.

Finally, coordination efforts are required in the design and implementation of sound **exit strategies** in order to facilitate the shift from humanitarian to longer-term programming.

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGN

The design phase of humanitarian food security projects is another critical aspect in linking short- and long-term objectives. Humanitarian food security programming must always be based on **systematic needs assessments** and **response analyses**. Where people are at increased risk of under- or malnutrition, needs assessments are essential in order to understand the type, degree, and extent of food insecurity and allow for the design of appropriate interventions. Response analysis, in turn, is a continuous process which ensures that responses are adapted to changing circumstances and support long-term food security objectives.

In the past, food-related humanitarian interventions were often drawn from a narrow range of pre-existing program 'packages'. In order to improve program impacts in the longer term, food security interventions must be **tailored to the given context** and take local realities into account.

Keeping in mind that the potential of humanitarian interventions extends beyond the immediate response, humanitarian practitioners should focus on issues of **risk and vulnerability** in the design of emergency food security projects and aim to enhance the resilience of crisis-affected populations.

RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The *Do No Harm* doctrine should be at the heart of any humanitarian response, ensuring that it meets short-term needs without exposing beneficiaries to any adverse effects. Responses have to be set up to ensure that benefits do not disappear once an intervention has been concluded.

Early interventions have been shown to be both effective and efficient in contributing to longer-term food security objectives and should therefore be a priority.

During the implementation phase, humanitarian projects should **draw on existing capacities** to strengthen local structures and foster long-term approaches and aims.

Community-based approaches are critical in food security activities in order to enhance the participation of affected populations, to build ownership, and to foster local capacities.

There is a wide variety of instruments in the humanitarian toolbox for food-related projects. The **optimal intervention choice** is highly context-dependent. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Practitioners need to make an informed choice between different options such as in-kind provisions, cash transfers, vouchers, Cash and Food for Work projects, or various nutrition instruments to create an ideal intervention. Often, different instruments can be usefully combined to create a coherent response.

PREVENTION

Since preventative strategies are far more efficient than cost-intensive emergency interventions, modern humanitarian interventions should contribute to prevention and preparedness efforts. Without compromising the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, humanitarian practitioners can play a role in supporting improved government and donor policies. Data gathered during humanitarian interventions can be used to **engage in advocacy** efforts for improved evidence-based practice.

Although **capacity building** is never the primary objective of humanitarian activities, the enhancement of knowledge and capabilities within target populations as well as the mobilization of civil society should be embedded in any intervention to influence and improve long-term impacts.

Since **preparedness** is the launch pad for integrating emergency and development projects, humanitarian practitioners should promote preparedness initiatives and assist in contingency planning.

Key recommendations are illustrated in brief case studies drawing on past experiences and lessons learned by member agencies of the Humanitarian Coalition.

Content

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The response to the 2012 Food Crisis in the Sahel region in West Africa proved once again that the line dividing humanitarian interventions and development programming is blurred. While there is a broad consensus that humanitarian responses effectively save lives in emergencies,[1] **bridging the gap between short- and long-term activities remains a challenge**.

In regions that are characterized by chronic food insecurity, malnutrition rates are usually near the warning level and death tolls spike during the annual hunger season. These cyclical nutritional crises are exacerbated by intense shocks caused by droughts, economic crises, violent conflicts, or the degradation of natural resources. Given these challenges, experts have made appeals to rethink the meaning of the terms 'normal' and 'crisis' in the context of chronic food insecurity.[2] Slow-onset food security crises in such regions are fundamentally different from rapid-onset emergency scenarios like floods or earthquakes. **Humanitarian interventions in chronic food insecurity settings are not isolated occurrences**. Emergency responses need to be linked to long-term activities to ensure the continuation of benefits after humanitarian aid measures have been completed. It is vital that practitioners adhere to the *Do No Harm* principle – holding themselves accountable for the potential effects assistance can have on undermining long-term food security efforts.[3]

This document summarizes recommendations for humanitarian practitioners to be used to improve planning and implementation of short-term humanitarian responses to acute phases of chronic food-insecurity crises. It identifies ways in which humanitarian responses can effectively support the recurring transition from relief to development and complement long-term efforts already underway to strengthen resilience. The guide is primarily intended for humanitarian managers and staff, whose task it is to ensure food security in times of emergencies.

It draws on an extensive literature review, as well as interviews and focus group discussions with experienced project staff involved in the 2012 drought response in the Sahel. Persons contacted included team members of humanitarian and development organizations and other stakeholders, such as international and national NGOs and experts from various United Nations bodies. The recommendations introduced here are based on an analysis of weaknesses and limitations of current practice that have been identified by the study's participants and are summarized briefly in the following section. This guide is intended to provide a synthesis of recommendations to address these shortcomings in order to overcome the transition gap between short- and longer-term food security interventions.

1 See the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008)

2 MSF, 2012

3 According to the *Do No Harm* principle, those involved in humanitarian response must take steps to avoid any adverse effects that their intervention might have on the affected population (Sphere, 2011).

CONSTRAINTS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF CURRENT HUMANITARIAN PRACTICE

The humanitarian imperative and primary goal of any emergency operation is to save lives. Humanitarian activities aim to *lower acute suffering* in particularly vulnerable population groups through various instruments. Addressing the *underlying social and economic causes of under- and malnutrition* is the objective of development interventions, which require a different set of resources and last for years or even decades. There are **various ways in which humanitarian responses can compromise longer-term programs and goals**. Presently, there is a gap in food security interventions that divides short-term emergency and long-term development programming. Emergency operations follow important quality standards[4] and they have successfully saved the lives of many in recent food crises, but they face significant challenges in ensuring that their results carry over to the longer term.

The five most commonly discussed features of humanitarian interventions that hamper the support of longer-term food security objectives are listed here.

Time Pressure. Emergencies often require rapid program responses with a maximum duration of three to twelve months. The first weeks are critical, and acting quickly is an absolute priority in crisis situations. Considering the short duration and relatively small staff size of humanitarian interventions, coordination efforts to address longer-term food security benefits take away precious time and staff resources from lifesaving activities. Even when large teams arrive to respond to an emergency, high staff turnover rates often result in program discontinuity and the loss of institutional memory to pass on to other actors in the affected region.[5]

Limited Government Capacities. Local, regional, and national governments hold the prime responsibility for any aid intervention. But in many cases – especially in regions that face a multitude of complex challenges – they are too weak and lack the necessary resources to protect vulnerable population groups. Often it is hardly possible for those who respond to emergencies to cooperate with local agencies or national ministries.

Restrictive Donor Funding Criteria. Humanitarian interventions are relatively well-funded in highly publicized emergency scenarios. Donors, however, are typically interested in swift and highly visible results. Practitioners are therefore constrained in the types of actions they can take. As one NGO staff member put it, "if you can deliver 200 trucks of food to beneficiaries, the donors are happy. But if you need two nutrition experts to ensure a higher quality in outcomes, donors tell you that you'll have to procure the funds for this yourself." Additionally, there is a distinct lack of funding for early and preventative interventions. Large sums of money do not typically flow unless the crisis is already at its peak.

Lack of Beneficiary Involvement. In acute humanitarian crises, the affected population is not usually in a situation that enables them to participate actively in food security interventions. A common weakness on the part of humanitarian actors in this situation is a fundamental lack of understanding and employment of local capabilities. Additionally, a disconnect between staff and

4 Some of the benchmark publications regarding quality standards of humanitarian practice include the Sphere Standards (Sphere, 2011), the HAP Standards of Accountability and Quality Management (HAP, 2010), the Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief (RCRC, 1995), and the ALNAP Guide for Evaluating Humanitarian Action (ALNAP, 2006)

5 See Loquercio et al. (2006) for a discussion on the positive and negative effects of staff turnover.

beneficiaries also leads to ineffective communication about entitlements and eligibility criteria. Given the short-term nature of humanitarian programming, beneficiaries are frequently left with the impression that all decisions in connection with an intervention are made by external actors and will be irrelevant once the project has been concluded. In the past, the choice of instruments and targeting procedures have often been a cause of contention because, for example, beneficiaries did not understand why certain individuals received unconditional cash transfers while others struggled to find income opportunities.

Lack of Coordination. This criticism is two-fold. Firstly, there is often a lack of *external* coordination among different types of organizations working in the field of food security. Secondly, some organizations exhibit *internal* organizational constraints by separating between humanitarian and development experts rather than deploying food and nutrition sector experts who are actively involved in both contexts. This can lead to a coordination gap within the agency. While all these actors share the same overall aims, the difference between emergency and development projects is sometimes seen as "a bit like the difference between someone who runs 100 meters and someone who runs a marathon." This fact has occasionally resulted in a lack of trust and even a sense of 'jealousy' among development practitioners, who feel that humanitarian interventions suppress and obstruct ongoing development activities for food security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

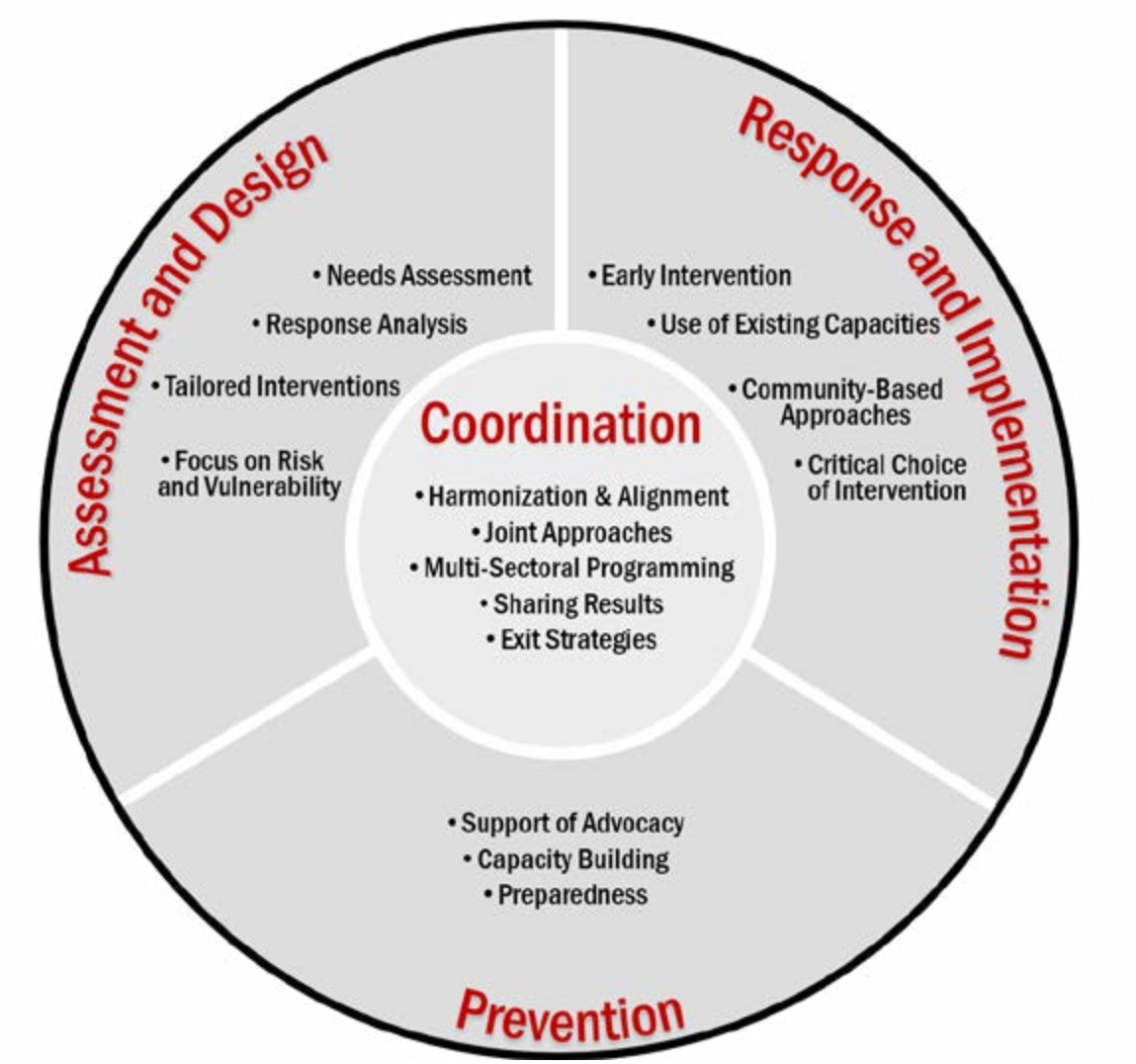
The benefits derived from humanitarian programs should continue even after interventions have been phased out.[6] Based on this objective, the recommendations introduced below have been identified as contributing factors to the overall success in linking short-term activities to longer-term objectives. They all revolve around the issue of **COORDINATION**, which is essential in bridging the gap between short- and long-term activities. Practitioners must never think of humanitarian crises as isolated incidences. Explicit efforts need to be made to improve the collaboration with other actors, including both aid and development agencies as well as government authorities.

In addition to the issue of coordination, the recommendations for humanitarian practitioners have been grouped into three categories which capture different facets of any emergency intervention. **ASSESSMENT AND DESIGN**: Effective interventions depend on appropriate needs assessments and response analyses. Practitioners must ensure that programs are tailored to their individual context in order to be able to focus on longer-term objectives during emergency interventions. **RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION**: Responses have to be set up to ensure that benefits do not disappear once an intervention is over. Humanitarian practitioners not only need to make difficult choices in selecting appropriate project tools, but also have to ensure that interventions are timely and incorporate existing community capacities as much as possible. The *Do No Harm* doctrine should be at the heart of any response. **PREVENTION**: Long-lasting preventative strategies are, without a doubt, far more cost efficient than rapid humanitarian interventions. Modern emergency operations and actors need to adjust to the demands for sustainable food security.

The guidelines are summed up in the graphic below. The categories are not strictly separated from one another. Issues related to assessment, response, and prevention are closely intertwined and will overlap in practice. Coordination is situated at the center of the configuration because it

6 OECD-DAC, 2002

relates to all the other categories and is crucial to overcoming the gap between short-term and long-term objectives.



COORDINATION

Humanitarian action must be harmonized with ongoing food security activities wherever possible.

Increasing the coordination and proactive interaction with other agencies and projects **ensures that short- and long-term interventions among multiple actors with different mandates complement each other**. Harmonization calls for the coordination of activities, the simplification of procedures and the sharing of information to avoid duplication.[7] The key questions in this context are: Who should intervene under what kinds of circumstances? What type of interventions are necessary? How long should the intervention last and what kind of exit strategies are required?

7 OECD, 2005

The progression from relief to development is not a linear process and actors and donors should renounce the idea of a continuum and accept the concept of a contiguum, according to which **humanitarian and development needs overlap**.[8] In accordance with the concept of a *twin-track approach*, food security should be thought of as a comprehensive effort to combine (a) direct action aiming to immediately tackle hunger for the most vulnerable with (b) medium- and long-term sustainable agriculture, nutrition and rural development to eliminate the root causes of hunger and poverty. In practice, this means that program managers should abandon the idea of a hand-off from humanitarian to development actors but instead strive to build uninterrupted chains or webs of intervention in collaboration with others to ensure the sustainability of achieved results.

Harmonized food security interventions combine the reduction of malnutrition with the protection of livelihoods. Effective coordination demands clearly articulated goals as well as significant staff, time, and resource commitments.[9] While there is little time to initiate cooperation during crisis interventions, steps to ensure coordination can take place in the preparedness stage of any intervention. **Activities that may harm ongoing development efforts must be avoided**. Poorly developed general food distribution or cash transfer programs, for example, may modify the economic recovery behavior of recipients or compete negatively with local agriculture and the livelihoods of host populations.

Interventions must be aligned with the food security objectives of national development strategies.

Alignment means that agencies should **base their activities on partner countries' national development strategies and coordinate development actions with public administrations**.[10] Alignment also implies respect for national standards, legal regulations, and procedures.

Despite potentially limited state capacities, activities should be coordinated by (or, at the very least with) local, regional and/or national governments as much as it is conceivable. In accordance with the 2009 Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security, efforts are being undertaken to increasingly invest in country-owned plans that are nationally articulated, designed, owned, and led. **Explicit efforts are required from practitioners to gather information on government activities and potential social protection programs** that can be linked up with emergency programs.

In regions with weak government capacities, state agencies should *not* be avoided. Instead, explicit efforts need to be made to support a clear government mandate for the intervention and to develop a forum for coordination, dialogue, and consultation involving state officials. Existing government initiatives and coordination bodies[11] should be used to their fullest potential to enhance government ownership. Program managers can increase government accountability by explicitly asking government officials to clarify their expectations. This requires official representatives to take over a certain degree of responsibility and to clearly define strategies in collaboration with all the actors involved in a project.

A critical dimension for any intervention that supports the rehabilitation of productive infrastructure is **how the assets built during the short-term intervention will be maintained afterwards**.

8 Harvey et al., 2010

9 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 8)

10 OECD, 2005

11 In the context of the Sahel, such official bodies include e.g. the Comité National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation (CONASUR) in Burkina Faso, the 3N Initiative (Nigériens Nourrissent Nigériens) in Niger, or the Comité de Développement (CODEP) in Mauritania.

Maintenance strategies could include community contributions as well as lobbying activities with the local government to call for the contribution of funds.

Humanitarian actors involved in food security interventions should advance cluster management and joint approaches.

Ideally, national government-led forums should address the questions "who should intervene when and how". National coordination mechanisms for the food security sector should frame all ongoing interventions and help different actors communicate. In countries where there is a lack of necessary government capacities, **cluster management is an effective alternative approach**. Food security and nutrition clusters in different countries have set out to improve system-wide effectiveness, coordination, and accountability in order to bring coherence to cross-cutting issues that involve multiple actors.

Other new large-scale initiatives also show considerable potential. In the Sahel, for example, both the European Commission's **Joint Humanitarian Development Framework** (JHDF) for Food Security and the newly designed Sahel **Joint Planning Cell** (JPC) under the auspices of USAID focus on integrating humanitarian and development programs. Because they do not draw strict funding lines between emergency and development, they are well-suited for the Sahel context. The JHDF aims to promote food security for the poor and vulnerable and calls for joint analysis of causes and joint identification of responses to crises that bring together humanitarian and development experts as well as government actors.[12] Similarly, the JPC has been formed to bring together humanitarian and development teams to build resilience across the Sahel. It combines existing and new programming to support resilience-building efforts in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal, with country-specific circumstances informing programming and funding levels.[13] These initiatives can serve as good practice examples for future directions in integrating humanitarian and development action.

CASE STUDY

***HARMONIZATION and ALIGNMENT:* Humanitarian Response to Floods in Burkina Faso, 2010**[14]

In July 2010, floods in Burkina Faso affected 105,000 people, causing severe damage to socio-economic infrastructure and people's livelihoods. In accordance with the *National Multi-Hazard Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan*, the humanitarian response was organized through the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The team was led by the UN Resident Coordinator and comprised of the National Committee for Emergency Aid and Rehabilitation (CONASUR), local authorities, UN agencies, and various local and international NGOs. The HCT prepared a multi-sectoral Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan.

The Food Aid sector was led by the World Food Program (WFP). Implementing partners included international NGOs like Oxfam, Save the Children, Action Contre La Faim (ACF), and Christian Aid; local organizations like MICROFI and L'Alliance Technique d'Assistance au Développement (ATAD);

12 Sokpoh, 2013

13 USAID, 2012

14 Based on OCHA, 2010a/b; Sokpoh, 2013; Intermón Oxfam 2011, and interview data. Photograph provided by Oxfam Burkina Faso, depicting an Intermón Oxfam Cash-for-Work project for the creation of new wells.

and government officials from CONASUR and the Ministry of Social Affairs. After sharing assessments and response strategies, each organization took up a different part of the intervention. For example, while the WFP and Christian Aid provided in-kind food assistance to vulnerable target groups, Intermón Oxfam and ACF conducted Cash-for-Work projects for the rehabilitation of infrastructure.

Despite some delays in the delivery of assistance, the emergency response to the 2010 flood is an exemplary case for successfully putting harmonization and alignment into practice. By sharing information, tailoring interventions, and engaging in multi-sectoral approaches, the humanitarian community engaged in a massive intervention that was well-coordinated by humanitarian and development practitioners. What is more, immediately following the emergency response, a consortium of implementing organizations joined a longer-term development project that was funded by the European Union's Delegation to Burkina Faso. Situated within the new Joint Humanitarian Development Framework, the LRRD-REPI[15] Project was explicitly set up to bridge the gap between emergency relief and longer-term development.

Multi-sectoral approaches are the key to long-term food security.

Food insecurity, under- and malnutrition in droughts have multiple and complex causes, including the collapse of livelihoods, lack of drinking water and poor hygiene, parasite infections, epidemics, displacement, and psychological trauma. Any stakeholder aiming to treat or prevent food insecurity and malnutrition needs to understand the direct causes and underlying roots of the problem. **The most successful program approaches are those that link food security with other necessary basic services** – especially water, sanitation, and hygiene, but also education, care practices, and health. Camp-settings in particular are well-suited for multi-sectoral approaches because the population lives under similar conditions and can be reached fairly easily through blanket programs. Focusing on more than one issue during the acute phase of a crisis eases the transition to subsequent longer-term interventions.

Assessments and results need to be shared with other stakeholders.

Transparency in humanitarian project work requires **honesty and openness in communications as well as the proactive sharing of relevant information** in an appropriate form with other stakeholders.[16]

Assessment reports provide invaluable information to other agencies and create baseline data for future activities. Sharing them ensures that assessments conducted for emergency and development purposes complement each other. The voluntary dissemination of reports and findings to local authorities - in addition to the responsible line ministry - and other stakeholders in the same zone, as well as the sharing of studies and experiences, increases transparency, facilitates coordination, and builds confidence. In order to achieve a greater level of transparency, organizations should not only ensure to publish and distribute their own assessments and the lessons learned during partic-

15 Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development – Relèvement des Populations Suite Aux Inondations
16 HAP, 2010; Sphere, 2011

ular interventions, but they should also **make explicit efforts to obtain material and information from partner organizations**, particularly locally active NGOs. Local partners may lack the necessary infrastructure to widely disperse their knowledge, but they often possess crucial expertise and established networks in a given area. Relevant information for humanitarian programming includes previous needs assessments, past targeting decisions, existing community capacities, current program locations, and lessons learned in the past. Effective information management is key to decision making, resource mobilization, and program steering.[17]

A coherent program requires sound exit strategies.

The transition from crisis intervention to recovery is more difficult without an exit strategy. **Knowing when to end an emergency response can be as important as knowing when to begin one**. Unless interventions like supplementary feeding programs are implemented in conjunction with programs addressing the *underlying causes* of malnutrition, they effectively become open-ended. Exit criteria should be defined based on a clear needs-based rationale. Exit statistics for life-saving interventions like therapeutic feeding programs should include information such as recovery rate, death rate, defaulting rate, non-response rate, and transfer rate. Exit plans need to link to the initial objectives of the intervention and map out a strategy for the development of local, national, and international partnerships to facilitate the shift to longer-term programming when the humanitarian intervention is phased out.[18]

CASE STUDY

***EXIT STRATEGIES:* Phasing Out Humanitarian Relief in Refugee Camps in Chad, 2012**[19]

While the arrival of Sudanese refugees fleeing Darfur was highly publicized since the mid-2000s, it is less well known that almost simultaneously, Chad also received new waves of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR). In 2012, CARE provided humanitarian relief to refugees from the CAR in four camps along the southern border of Chad. Due to the unpredictable security situation in their home country, there was no prospect for immediate repatriation for displaced persons. Given these circumstances, the organization sought an exit strategy to phase out humanitarian assistance in a way that linked to longer-term development initiatives. Initially, CARE distributed food rations to nearly 35,000 refugees in the region. When the local government began providing land for cultivation to the refugees, CARE could start reducing the quantity of distributed food. In a harmonized effort, UNHCR simultaneously initiated the provision of agricultural materials and seeds for farming. By June 2012, CARE could phase out food distributions entirely in the Yaroungo camp because the overall aim of refugee self-sufficiency had been reached in a coordinated effort with the other actors in the region.

17 Grünewald and Paul, 2012

18 ALNAP and ProVention, 2007 (Lesson 4)

19 Based on CARE 2012. Photograph by CARE International, depicting refugees from the Central African Republic in Chad.

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGN

Humanitarian action to address food insecurity must be based on systematic needs assessments and response analyses.

Where people are at increased risk of under- or malnutrition, needs assessments are essential to understand the type, degree, and extent of food insecurity. In an acute crisis, multi-sector initial rapid assessments[20] may be sufficient to obtain a fast and clear vision of a specific context at a given time, but particularly in protracted crisis situations, **assessment is a continuous process**. Program managers should make use of advanced assessment measures[21] and carry out analyses jointly with other stakeholders. Keeping longer-term objectives in mind, assessments should determine:[22]

- Who needs assistance and why?
- How have livelihoods been affected and what coping strategies are being used?
- What types of assistance are required for how long?
- What resources are locally available?
- What are other agencies doing? What type of cooperation is possible and feasible?

Response analysis is a crucial step in between assessing needs and planning a response, which involves analyzing the likely impact of alternative responses and recommending how the needs identified should be met through what combination of instruments. Any decision to provide food, cash, a combination of these, or something else entirely, should always be based on an objective analysis and clearly defined goals.[23] **Initial responses should be adapted to reflect changing circumstances**. For example, cash-based responses may become more appropriate as markets recover, or they might become inappropriate if inflation starts to rise.

Food security interventions must be tailored to the given context. Avoid "one size fits all" approaches.

Humanitarian interventions need to **take into account local environmental contexts, existing capabilities, and ongoing development efforts**. In the past, food-related interventions have often failed to address the needs defined by the population, and did not always account for existing community assets. Instead, they were frequently drawn from a narrow range of pre-existing one-size-fits-all packages that included general food distributions and agricultural inputs.[24] In times of emergency, the stability, predictability, and timing of an intervention is as critical to its success as the resource transfer itself. Multi-sectoral livelihoods assessments, rather than assessments focusing on food security only, can contribute to more appropriate responses.[25] People in regions

20 Available rapid assessment tools include the *Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment and the Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods 48-hour Assessment Tool*

21 E.g. the *Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification tool, the Household Dietary Diversity Score, Household Livelihood Security Assessments*, and market analysis tools like the *Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis* kit.

22 Based on IASC (2010)

23 See also ALNAP and ProVention, 2007 (Lesson 3)

24 Levine and Chastre, 2004

25 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 11)

that suffer from chronic crisis have been living with this situation their entire lives. Different groups (pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, farmers, etc.) have developed different ways to cope. Humanitarian efforts should try to identify and support these coping strategies in cooperation with local actors, public agencies, and civil society organizations, thereby strengthening communities' resilience.[26]

Place concepts of risk and vulnerability at the center.

The potential of humanitarian interventions extends beyond the immediate response. **Efforts to work on the prevention of future crises can and should be a critical part of the daily activities of humanitarian practitioners**. Humanitarian action has to provide focused support to communities to foster innovation, experimentation, and diversification of livelihoods.[27] In accordance with the *Do No Harm* principle, emergency responses must meet short-term needs, reduce the need for the affected population to adopt potentially damaging coping strategies, and take all reasonable steps to ensure that beneficiaries are not subjected to any hazards.

In complex challenges, humanitarian practitioners should develop a single flexible program that bridges the humanitarian-development divide and focuses on the particular risks and vulnerabilities of the given context. Existing humanitarian capacity and experience therefore play a key role. Humanitarians are not simply short-term actors, but should instead **strive to become sector experts who interact closely with development personnel and other key stakeholders**. Specialists need to actively promote joint program approaches which will ensure greater staff continuity and create synergies in at-risk areas. This will result in improved linkages between short-term and long-term interventions.

RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Early intervention contributes to improving longer-term food security impacts.

In today's globalized world, no slow-onset emergency arrives as a surprise anymore. But despite major advances in the sophistication and capabilities of modern warning systems, there often remains a **disconnect between warning and response**. Early warning systems currently have a poor track record of triggering early intervention.[28] This problem needs to be addressed by both humanitarian and development actors. A crucial decision in this context lies in the question: *When* is the time to recognize that there is a food crisis? In order to make this decision, humanitarian actors should identify objective trigger indicators[29], rely on the input of community committees, and cooperate with local governments.

Early mitigation efforts have proven to be both efficient and effective in reducing the cost of relief and recovery. For example, a study of the 2005 food crisis in Niger illustrates the cost of belated action: At the onset of the crisis in October 2004, $1 per child per day was necessary to save lives, whereas $80 per day was required in July 2005.[30] The early injection of resources has proven to be an important measure to mitigate destitutions, limit the sale of productive assets, and reduce

26 ALNAP and ProVention, 2007 (Lesson 1)

27 Oxfam, 2013

28 Bailey, 2013

29 Indicators should be based on measurable metrics such as rainfall and the prevalence of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) or global acute malnutrition (GAM). Pre-determined alert thresholds should trigger an early response.

30 Mousseau, 2006, p. 13

dependency on usury money lending.[31] In order to inject resources at critical times and increase their long-term impacts, **humanitarian practitioners need to know and understand seasonal cropping and cash flow calendars**.

Humanitarian projects need to build on existing capacities and past experiences.

In regions that suffer from chronic food insecurity, local NGOs are often already present, conducting long-term development programs. Humanitarian interventions should **build on their knowledge and expertise with regard to targeting and in the design of sound exit strategies**. Already established community systems and capacities should be integrated in program approaches. Where possible, existing governmental structures must be used to ensure the complementarity of multi-sectoral inputs.

Particularly in food security interventions, the shifting trend from tied in-kind to untied food aid and a growing **commitment to local and regional procurement** is a significant improvement to past practices.[32] The resulting beneficial impacts with longer-term repercussions include the boosting of agricultural production and the stimulation of markets.

Targeting the most vulnerable has received much attention and resulted in successful outcomes with positive long-term implications. Nutritional support of children during the first 1,000 days of their life as well as for pregnant and lactating women has proven to be an extremely effective means of preventing developmental defects like wasting and stunting in future generations, thereby contributing significantly to resilience-building.

Humanitarian actors must strengthen community-based approaches.

Enhancing participation among community members is a demanding requirement. Participation is understood as **the engagement of affected populations in one or more phases of the project cycle:** assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.[33] It is a call for humanitarian actors to actively find and make use of local capacities. An understandable desire for speed and timeliness in emergencies may make it difficult to meet commitments to participation; but a need for expediency should not trump good programming practice. Although emergency interventions may be more easily planned without involving actors on the ground, local realities need to play a role in order to make results of humanitarian activities last beyond the duration of the intervention. It is significantly easier to consult beneficiaries in slow-onset crises than in sudden emergencies.

It is recommended to work with **local selection committees** and to involve customary leaders to ensure the transparency of targeting and eligibility criteria. Communities possess more information about their members than external agencies and involving them in decision-making may result in increased ownership and improved monitoring of both processes and results.

Community-based approaches, however, require careful monitoring and assessment. While creating community mechanisms can build social capital and increase cohesion in some cases, they

31 Grünewald and Paul, 2012; Bailey, 2013
32 Maxwell et al. 2008a
33 ALNAP, 2003

may result in a reinforcement of existing power structures and a disregard of the needs of particular socially marginalized groups (e.g. single mothers, disabled persons, or people living with HIV/AIDS) – despite the fact that these people are often the most in need.[34] In cultures where women are not comfortable discussing issues in front of the general community and its leaders, female-only forums and other mechanisms need to be developed to ensure their say in decision-making, especially regarding issues that predominantly affect them.[35]

The choice of intervention is critical in developing linkages to longer-term objectives.

The optimal intervention choice depends on a project's context. This section provides a *brief* overview of selected instruments commonly used during humanitarian interventions in areas of chronic food insecurity.[36] It provides a summary for transfer and nutrition instruments from the humanitarian toolbox[37] and briefly discusses their advantages and disadvantages in different scenarios.

IN-KIND FOOD AID refers to the provision of rations, distributed at regular intervals to everyone in a geographic area (blanket distribution), or to specific individuals or groups in a geographic area (targeted distribution). **It is appropriate and can save lives where response is late or food is temporarily unavailable**.[38] Distributions should provide the difference between beneficiaries' food requirements and the amount of food they are able to provide for themselves. **In-kind food aid is only a short-term solution, and timing is crucial**. It needs to be implemented *before* affected populations adopt long-term negative coping strategies. Due to the risk of hampering longer-term development by undermining local markets and production, in-kind food aid needs to be phased out as soon as appropriate food is locally available. Once food can be purchased on local markets, alternative instruments, such as cash distributions or voucher schemes become more efficient and effective.

CASH TRANSFERS refer to the provision of money to individuals or households. They generally intend to meet people's basic food needs or help them buy essential assets for the recovery of their livelihoods. They are appropriate when markets are functioning, people can purchase food and assets locally, and cash can be delivered and spent safely. Cash transfers are either conditional or unconditional. A *conditional cash transfer* requires a certain behavior from beneficiaries in order to be paid out (e.g. attending a health clinic or educational facility). During acute crises, *unconditional cash transfers* are more common because **they provide a rapid and convenient way to increase individual and household purchasing power in times of extreme need**.

One of the central benefits of cash is its flexibility and the fact that people may choose to spend it on a wide range of items, depending on their specific needs. **Cash is a highly cost efficient way of helping people** because more beneficiaries can be supported with a greater value of resources than with in-kind alternatives. Evidence shows that cash in the hands of women increases the likelihood that the money will be spent on the household.[39] Cash is also particularly appropriate for certain

34 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 5)

35 REGLAP, 2012

36 Note that the list of intervention tools discussed here is ***not exhaustive***, given the scope of this guide document. Please refer to IASC (2008), Maxwell et al. (2008a), CaLP (2010), Harvey et al. (2010), and Sphere (2011), as well as the Additional Resources in ANNEX 2 for detailed information.

37 Additional instruments not discussed in this guide include special measures for particular target groups such as the provision of agricultural inputs for farmers or livestock interventions for pastoralists. See e.g. LEGS (2009), CIAT (2006).

38 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 10)

39 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 9)

groups such as pastoralists, because they have well-developed relationships with markets, and because they can easily carry it with them.[40]

At the same time, cash instruments should be implemented cautiously because they have the potential to undermine ongoing development efforts. A frequent concern among development actors relates to disincentive effects: beneficiaries can get used to receiving cash grants during humanitarian interventions, and later refuse to contribute to longer-term development efforts that do not involve unconditional remuneration. Therefore, **unconditional cash transfers must be accompanied with a clear message about their rationale and purpose**. Objective selection criteria have to be identified in cooperation with the community and complaint mechanisms must be operational. Additionally, cash programs need to be coordinated regionally to ensure the use of similar practices by different agencies.

Implementing actors should view cash transfers **as a tool that can be usefully combined with other interventions** (e.g. nutritional support). In designing and implementing cash-based relief responses, humanitarian agents need to consider a number of questions in order to assess how they link to longer-term development:

- Are there existing social assistance programs in the project area?
- Are there options for linking recipients of the emergency cash transfer to longer-term assistance?
- Do social assistance programs provide options for the identification of vulnerable groups?
- Do existing programs have at their disposal any options for the delivery of cash?
- Can the capacity of local government agencies involved in social assistance programs be increased?

Depending on changing contexts, **the appropriateness of cash-based responses should be assessed routinely**.[41] Cash transfers are viable options in emergencies when markets are operational, production disincentives are a significant concern, and inflationary risks are low.

VOUCHERS, in the shape of coupons, tokens, or electronic cards, provide access to pre-defined commodities or services. They enhance individual or household purchasing power, and can secure access to food and increase food consumption. Voucher programs, like cash transfers, require functioning markets and the availability of key commodities. They are more feasible in slow-onset scenarios than in rapid-onset emergencies because voucher schemes take some time to establish.

To meet particular goals, vouchers can be used as complementary interventions to other instruments. For example, when treating malnutrition in supplementary or therapeutic feeding programs, they can serve as an incentive to participate by making their provision conditional upon atten-

40 ALNAP and ProVention, 2007
41 Harvey and Bailey, 2011

dance.[42] They are also useful tools to increase the availability of fresh foods in household, thereby reducing the risk of sharing of therapeutic food rations.[43]

Voucher programs exert more control over the intended procurement and supply of specific commodities than cash transfers. Therefore, **they can effectively contribute to certain longer-term objectives – such as improving the nutritional status of beneficiaries**. As with cash transfers, humanitarian staff must assess if a voucher program can be linked up to existing projects in the area of intervention.

CASH FOR WORK (CFW) and **FOOD FOR WORK (FFW)** initiatives are temporary labour opportunities where beneficiaries receive cash or in-kind food in return for work to restore, rehabilitate, or create useful community or household assets. They are effective distribution mechanisms where work input is required, surplus labour is available in target households, and where it does not disrupt successful coping strategies.[44] Because these projects typically contribute to the rehabilitation of productive infrastructure, **CfW and FfW schemes provide a crucial link between short- and long-term program objectives**. The main objective of FfW programs is to increase individual and household food consumption while creating beneficial assets. CfW programs allow participants to make their own spending choices and are therefore often viewed as more empowering than FfW projects.

Potential drawbacks of these instruments include the fact that only a certain number of beneficiaries can access labour opportunities. Participation in aid projects can be undignified for participants – project staff therefore needs to **ensure that work requirements are approved by the affected community**. Disadvantaged groups, who may not be able to participate in work schemes, require special assistance. Interventions involving labour requirements need to be carefully timed because they must never interfere with other productive livelihood activities such as sowing or harvesting. Because special work projects must be selected and designed, CfW and FfW programs are generally more complex and costly than cash grants. Humanitarian practitioners must receive approval from local authorities and sign agreements that clearly lay out roles and responsibilities – particularly with regard to the future maintenance of created assets.

NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS provide life-saving care and set the stage for subsequent resilience-building development efforts.

Supplementary Feeding Programs (SFPs) provide nutritious supplementary foods to vulnerable groups in order to treat mild and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), or to prevent a deterioration of the nutritional status of vulnerable target groups. These programs often focus particularly on pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under the age of two, in order to prevent them from developing severe acute malnutrition (SAM), which has harmful effects on children's long-term development.

Therapeutic Feeding Programs (TFPs) intend to save the lives of individuals suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). They combine the administration of routine medication with specific (often ready-to-use) therapeutic foods and individualized care. The effective implementation of a TFP requires sound expertise and should be carried out through local health structures in order to

42 See Dunn (2009) for an excellent example of a fresh food voucher program handed out to the caretakers of malnourished children in the Dadaab refugee camp. It not only increased household dietary diversity among beneficiaries but also enhanced the coverage of a supplementary feeding program for children.

43 ACF, 2012

44 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 11)

strengthen community capacities and train local health workers. The high quality of food provisions is of crucial importance, as low-cost cereal-based fortified flours have proven to do more harm than good.[45]

Infant- and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) programs aim to prevent mortality in children under the age of five and to enhance their long-term growth and development prospects. By promoting early, exclusive and continued breastfeeding, (or by providing healthy substitutes where breastfeeding is not an option, e.g. for HIV/Aids patients), it supplies infants and young children with safe and nutritious food that strengthens their immune systems and overall resilience.

Micronutrient Interventions seek to ensure an adequate intake of vital minerals and vitamins to treat and prevent illnesses and mortality. In areas of chronic food insecurity, where micronutrient deficiency is known to be prevalent, its effects are likely to be exacerbated by crisis. In order to ensure the sustainability of micronutrient provisions, programs should be embedded in existing health structures, where they can be continued for vulnerable groups after humanitarian aid has been phased out.

Choosing appropriate interventions is an important and challenging task for humanitarian project managers, who need to ensure that humanitarian program choices can be linked up with longer-term development efforts in the area of intervention. The combination of different tools should already be pursued in humanitarian intervention phases. Through coordination efforts, they can be adapted for longer-term development programming, depending on each individual context.

CASE STUDY

***USE OF EXISTING CAPACITIES and MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACHES:* Niger Drought Response, 2012**[46]

More than six million people in Niger were affected by the drought crisis in 2012. Save the Children launched an early response in January, targeting the regions Zinder, Maradi, and Diffa. In April, the emphasis shifted from preventative cash transfers to immediate life-saving interventions. Activities were aligned with the Emergency Response Plan issued by the government. In a multi-sectoral "One Program Approach," the response built on existing interventions in the country. More than 120,000 children under the age of five as well as pregnant and lactating women were treated for malnutrition in clinics operated by the Ministry of Health. At the same time, general food distributions were conducted in collaboration with the World Food Program and monthly cash transfers were provided to vulnerable households during the lean season. Choosing a multi-sectoral approach, Save the Children also engaged in WASH activities in the region, providing hygiene kits, water purification tablets, soap and buckets. Additionally, seed and agricultural equipment were distributed to help families restore their livelihoods.

45 MSF, 2011

46 Based on Save the Children 2012a/b. Photograph by Rachel Palmer, depicting a girl receiving a supplementary feeding ration

PREVENTION

Humanitarian practitioners should use their expertise to engage in advocacy efforts without compromising principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Government motivation and capacity, as well as the design and implementation of long-term plans are critical to establishing food security.[47] By aligning projects with existing government initiatives, resources can be used strategically to contribute to the development of capacities of government counterparts.[48] Where governments do not take a lead role in reacting to a crisis, experts need to support them in the design of country programs and contingency plans that contain overarching national strategies to which any intervention can be aligned.[49]

Even while maintaining the neutrality and impartiality which have come to define their work, **humanitarian practitioners are in a position that allows them to mobilize civil society and affected communities to influence government decision-making**. Wherever possible, project proposals should therefore be designed to hold duty-bearers responsible.[50]

Data and documentation that is collected and prepared by humanitarian staff can be used to lobby governments and donors. Actors in humanitarian contexts should increasingly consider the implementation of test-trials in different communities to improve evidence-based practice.[51] Evidence from such trials can be used to improve public policy and funding practices. Such practices are possible without compromising the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Projects should comprise capacity building and knowledge transfer.

While capacity building is never the primary objective of humanitarian projects, **the increase of knowledge and capability within the target population should be embedded in any intervention**. Since food assistance projects are financed on a short-term, project-by-project basis in difficult and fragile contexts, the ability of humanitarian agents to implement specific measures to enhance capacity building, training, and skills transfer at the local level is often circumscribed. Instead, capacity development in this context refers to the integration of program components that foster local 'cognitive infrastructure. It calls for the integration of activities that contribute to the sustainability of the intervention. This includes improved capabilities within the affected population to self-organize, establish supportive structures, adapt practice, and maintain assets. Assessments carried out in preparation for food assistance interventions should therefore always include existing capacities of local populations, government agencies, and civil society actors.

Health-related emergency interventions that require significant staff input (e.g. therapeutic feeding programs) should emphasize **the involvement and training of local nurses and community health workers**. Improved community management for diagnosing and treating moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) can also be developed by involving community members in activities, for example by

47 Harvey et al., 2010

48 ALNAP, 2011 (Lesson 7)

49 Ethiopia's Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP) serves as a good practice example. With a contingency provision built in for emergencies, it serves as a framework for both development and humanitarian interventions.

50 Oxfam, 2013

51 Maxwell et al., 2008b

showing caretakers how to administer a MUAC[52] measurement and passing on knowledge on how to limit the spread of communicable diseases.

The manner of **involving local committees** should provide them with important skills such as the use of modern technology and the creation of local early warning systems. The mobilization of civil society in the shape of selection committees in intervention areas where they do not yet exist can contribute to improved local coordination in the future. These committees can help identify those segments of a population which are at risk of hunger, ill health, and poverty in advance of a crisis, which allows for more rapid and effective future responses.

Humanitarian actors need to promote contingency planning and preparedness.

The responsibility for building resilience lies with both development and humanitarian actors. **Humanitarian interventions must not undermine ongoing resilience-building efforts**. Agencies operating in drought-prone regions should base programming on drought cycle management, conduct joint analysis to identify windows of opportunity for interventions, and carry out preparedness auditing in order to prepare their interventions. In the aftermath of acute phases of crisis, humanitarian experts can contribute to the development of advanced planning schemes and the preparation for future emergencies in regions at high risk of recurrent crises. Given that crises often return in a cyclical manner, humanitarian aid needs to be planned for and embedded in development efforts. Preparedness is the launch pad for integrating emergency responses in development work. Planning for it requires the close cooperation of both humanitarian and development actors.

Additionally, wherever possible, the infrastructure established for humanitarian interventions should be designed in a way that supports long-term improvement. For example, the protection and restoration of productive assets and capacities should already be a concern during humanitarian intervention phases.

52 Mid-Upper Arm Circumference

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ANNEX 3 – LIST OF PERSONS CONTACTED

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ANNEX 4 – FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Engagement questions

1. How do you differentiate humanitarian response and development?

2. How do we define humanitarians?

3. What do you notice when you work with (for humanitarians) development practitioners? / (for development) humanitarian practitioners? How are humanitarian and development practitioners different?

Exploration questions

4. How can humanitarian responses undermine long-term food security objectives?

5. What factors are needed for humanitarian responses to support long-term food security objectives?

6. Humanitarians – What specific constraints do humanitarians face in the design and implementation of short term responses in situations of chronic food insecurity?

7. How do humanitarian and development managers collaborate to explore opportunities for integrating their programs and strategies? If they don't how should they?

8. Development – How are development managers consulted in the planning and design phases of humanitarian programs in times of acute food security crises?

9. How can humanitarians improve linkages between their programs and long-term improvements in food security?

10. What should humanitarian actors not do in order to avoid undermining long-term food security program priorities and gains?

Exit question

11. Is there anything else you would like to say about ensuring short-term humanitarian programs by NGOs support long-term food security objectives?

ANNEX 5 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section 1 – General Questions

1. In your experience, what have been the most successful program approaches to improving long-term food security in chronically food insecure communities? Please NAME A FEW EXAMPLES of project types.

2. In your experience, what are the main differences between humanitarian and development program approaches to food security? How would you define humanitarian and development 'thinking' with regards to food security?

3. In your experience, do short-term humanitarian responses typically support long-term food security objectives? YES / NO – please explain.

4. What are the constraints faced by humanitarian actors in the design and implementation of short-term responses in situations of chronic food insecurity?

    - How much do donor funding restrictions impact opportunities for adaptation of humanitarian programs to promote long-term food security?

    - To what extent are humanitarian program managers aware of long-term food security priorities and able to successfully integrate these in their project designs?

    - Are development staff involved in planning/designing/implementing humanitarian programs?

    - Are there structural (organizational/staffing/logistical etc.) obstacles that limit the adaptation of humanitarian programs to long-term food security objectives?

    - Are there fundamental conflicts between humanitarian principles (e.g. impartiality, targeting the most vulnerable etc.) and the strategies required to promote long-term food security objectives?

5. What role do local/regional/national governments play in the successful implementation of (short- and long-term) food security projects? Can you share experiences from your work in the field?

Section 2 – Interaction between Humanitarian and Development Programs

6. In your organization, do humanitarian and development managers collaborate on an ongoing basis to explore opportunities for integrating their respective approaches and programs?

    - If yes, please explain how this is done.

    - If no, explain any difficulties that arise from this situation.

7. Are development program managers consulted in the design phase of humanitarian programs? YES / NO. Please explain. (At what stage does the consultation occur? Are existing programs taken into consideration?)

8. To what extent are existing food security programs considered in the targeting of humanitarian interventions? Are you aware of occasions when humanitarian food security programs were carried out in direct consideration of existing food security programs?

9. Are the same types of impact assessments carried out for short- and long-term food security programming? Are results shared between humanitarian and development managers?

Section 3 – Adapting short-term humanitarian responses to better contribute to long-term FS

10. How can humanitarian practitioners improve the linkages between their actions in the field and long-term improvements in food security?

11. What best practice is identified by development practitioners in terms of short humanitarian responses successfully promoting long-term food security?

12. What specific recommendations would allow humanitarian programming to better complement ongoing long-term food security objectives in situations of chronic food insecurity? What existing practices should humanitarian programs avoid in order not to hinder or set-back long-term food security program gains?