

Glossary of Food Security Terminology

Analysis plan – a framework providing details of the information that needs to be collected from primary and secondary sources.

Assets – anything that is considered valuable or useful, such as a skill, a quality, a person, etc. (*Source: Chambers Compact Dictionary*). In the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, assets are defined under the following five categories:

- **Human:** health and nutrition status; physical capacity; skills; level of education; etc.
- **Social:** household, gender, kinship and other networks; community groups; values and attitudes; etc.
- **Financial:** income; credit and loans; savings; liquid assets; etc.
- **Physical:** productive assets, such as tools and equipment; stores; housing; livestock; infrastructure; etc.
- **Natural:** land; water; forests; etc.

Chronic food insecurity – a long-term or persistent inability to meet minimum food requirements.

Cluster sampling – the sample is defined in stages, usually as: geographical areas, locations, and groups/households/individuals.

Community group discussion – discussion with a mixed group of community members that includes men, women and young people from all subgroups within the community (village, camp, urban neighbourhood, etc.).

Composite shock – a variety of different shocks that interact.

Contextual information – details of the processes that led to the current emergency and the reasons why it is occurring; factors that help to explain the emergency and give insights into the responses that may be appropriate.

Convenience sampling – households and individuals are selected on the basis of ease of access.

Coping strategies – activities to which people resort in order to obtain food, income and/or services when their normal means of livelihood have been disrupted.

Coping strategies index (CSI) – a methodology for estimating the food security status of households according to the coping strategies to which they resort.

Cross tabulation – the process of combining two or more indicators; used, for example, to gain insights into the prevalence and causes of malnutrition and food insecurity.

Data – the pieces of information collected from primary or secondary sources.

Direct sampling – households and individuals are selected directly from the entire sampling frame.

Dominant opportunities and shocks – the opportunities and shocks that will dominate the evolution of the food and nutrition security situation in the coming months.

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Dynamic variables – features that can change quickly; indicators of transitory problems that may exacerbate existing chronic problems.

Emergency – a situation that causes widespread human, material, economic or environmental damage, threatening human lives and/or livelihoods and exceeding the coping capacities of the affected communities and/or government.

Entry points – the sectors and broad types of intervention where needs may first be addressed; they are identified in response analysis.

Focus group discussion – discussion with a group of people sharing at least one characteristic.

Food access – a household's ability to regularly acquire adequate amounts of food through a combination of its own home production and stocks, purchases, barter, gifts, borrowing or food aid.

Food access gap – comparison of household food expenditure with the cost of a minimum food basket, taking into consideration the proportion of food that is not purchased, such as food coming from own production.

Food availability – concerns the food that is **physically present** in the area of concern, through all forms of domestic production, commercial imports and food aid. This might be aggregated at the regional, national, district or community level.

Food consumption gap – the gap between food consumption required to meet nutrition needs and actual food consumption.

Food consumption score (FCS) – a proxy indicator that represents the energetic (calories) and nutritional (macro- and micronutrient content) value of the food that people eat. It is calculated based on the type of foods and the frequency with which people consume them over a seven-day period.

Food security – exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs, and food preferences for an active and healthy life (*Source: World Food Summit, 1996*).

Food utilization – refers to: i) households' use of the food to which they have access; and ii) individuals' ability to absorb and metabolize the nutrients – the conversion efficiency of food by the body.

Forecast analysis – analysis to predict the nature of future opportunities and shocks, and the ways in which the situation is likely to evolve.

In-depth assessment – undertaken when substantial time, access and resources are available. In-depth assessments use rigorous methodologies that are adapted to the context, such as random, large-scale household food security and nutrition surveys, and household economy baseline surveys.

Indicator – a specific variable, or combination of variables, that gives insight into a particular aspect of the situation.

Information needs – the data that must be collected and processed from primary and secondary sources in order to fulfil the assessment objectives.

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Initial assessment – assessment undertaken promptly following: i) a sudden crisis; ii) reports of deterioration in a long-term crisis; or iii) improved access in an ongoing crisis. An initial assessment is based mainly on secondary data and key informant interviews, but some quick field visits may be undertaken.

Key informant interviews – individuals with good knowledge about particular aspects of the community or the present emergency are interviewed.

Livelihoods – the capabilities, assets – both material and social – and activities required for a means of living linked to survival and future well-being (*Source: Sphere Handbook*).

Livelihood group – a group of people who share the same basic means of livelihood and life style – i.e. the same main subsistence activities, main income activities and social and cultural practices – and who face the same risks of food and nutrition insecurity.

Livelihood strategies – the ways in which households utilize and combine their assets to obtain food, income and other goods and services.

Nutrition security – a situation in which all individuals and households are food-secure, have good access to preventive and curative health care, and undertake healthy and sustainable care practices.

Observation – visible and significant aspects of the affected area are noted.

Opportunities – events that ameliorate the situation. They can be natural or human-induced.

Primary data – data collected during the assessment, from interviews with key informants, focus groups, households and individuals.

Proxy indicator – an indirect means of measuring a variable. They provide information about a factor indirectly.

Purposive sampling – particular groups are selected for interview.

Qualitative data – observations that are categorical rather than numerical; they often involve attitudes, perceptions and intentions.

Quantitative data – observations that are numerical.

Questionnaire – a series of questions carefully formulated and ordered; the same questionnaire is addressed to each household in the selected sample.

Random sampling – all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected.

Rapid assessment – undertaken following an initial assessment in a sudden crisis, or as a component of a reassessment. It is based on a combination of secondary and primary data.

Response analysis – analysis to determine the need, or otherwise, for an intervention and, if appropriate, to identify the most suitable types of intervention, the timing and the targeting criteria.

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Sample – a selection of households or individuals from the total affected population.

Sampling frame – the area and population that the assessment covers.

Scenario – a description of situations that could occur; it is a set of informed assumptions about a situation (*Source: ODI Network Paper No. 59*).

Secondary data – data collected from outside the current assessment.

Secondary opportunities and shocks – opportunities and shocks that are: i) *caused* by the dominant event – cascade effects; ii) unrelated to the dominant event but *enhancing* or *mitigating* its effects – synergistic effects; or iii) subsumed by the dominant event.

Semi-structured interview – interview based on a pre-prepared series of questions on a checklist, the phrasing, order and form of which are not fixed.

Shocks – events with negative impact on nutrition status and/or food security. They can be natural or caused by human action.

Situation analysis – analysis of the *current* food security and nutrition status of the population and its risks to lives and livelihoods.

Snowball sampling – households and individuals are selected according to recommendations from other informants; each informant recommends the next set of informants.

Stage sampling – see **cluster sampling**.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis – a way of systematically appraising different response options, based on their strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats associated with them.

Structural variables – the underlying features of individuals, or the society and area in which they live; they do not change quickly, and therefore indicate chronic (permanent) issues.

Terms of reference – instructions describing how the assessment will be carried out, and the roles and responsibilities of the assessment team; prepared at the start of the assessment.

Transitory food insecurity – a short-term or temporary inability to meet minimum food requirements, indicating a capacity to recover.

Triangulation – the process through which information from different sources is compared to determine whether or not evidence converges.

Trigger – an event or series of events indicating that the nutritional or food security situation is deteriorating, or has already reached a level of crisis, and that an assessment is needed.