Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)

Evidence and standards for better food security decisions

Decision-makers are often called to address a food and nutrition crisis and persistent food insecurity without having adequate information about the food security situation. Furthermore, a lack of a common language and clear thresholds for classifying the severity of food insecurity has sometimes led to inappropriate short-term response and no long-term solutions.

In order to fill this gap, the main UN agencies and international NGOs working on food security committed themselves to developing the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and using it as a common scale to generate evidence on the severity and causes of food and nutrition crisis, and persistent food insecurity. In doing so, they recognized not only the rigorous standards backing up the IPC food security analysis, but the advantages of the IPC analytical process which brings together key stakeholders.

IPC helps answering:

- How severe is the situation?
- Where are the areas that are food insecure?
- How many are the food insecure people?
- What are the key driving factors?

With over 10 years of application, IPC has proved to be a best practice in the global food security field and a model of collaboration in over 20 countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia where the IPC partnership has strengthened local capacity in conducting food security analysis, and is used by decision-makers to inform resource allocation, strategic planning, programme design and monitoring for delivering and ending aid needs.

How food insecurity is measured with IPC

IPC is a set of analytical tools and procedures that allow governments and partners to work together to classify the severity and magnitude of acute and chronic food insecurity, and acute malnutrition according to scientific international standards. The main goal is to provide decision-makers with a rigorous, evidence- and consensus-based analysis of food insecurity to inform and coordinate response planning and programming.

IPC consists of three main systems to classify the severity of acute food insecurity, persistent food insecurity, and acute malnutrition. Each IPC classification has important and distinct implications for where and how best to intervene and therefore influences priority response objectives.

The IPC Acute and Chronic Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition classifications are determined by the analysis of a range of outcomes triangulated with several contributing factors and convergence of all evidence available in a country. By using international standards, IPC results can be used to compare the situation in one place with the other; track the severity of the situations over the time; and indicate the changing of a food insecure situation and, critically, changes in the required responses.

IPC-Acute Scale

- Phase 1 - Minimal
- Phase 2 - Stressed
- Phase 3 - Crisis
- Phase 4 - Emergency
- Phase 5 - Famine

IPC-Chronic Scale

- Level 1 - Minimal CFI
- Level 2 - Mild CFI
- Level 3 - Moderate CFI
- Level 4 - Severe CFI

Making a difference through partnership and FAO role

At the **global level**, the IPC Global Partnership now includes twelve partners that oversee the IPC technical development, set international quality and compliance standards and help ensure that IPC really is a "common currency" to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity.

**The EC in the global partnership is represented by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission*

Regional level work is important because crises often cross over borders. IPC regional partners include the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the South African Development Community (SADC) and SICA-PRESANCA (*Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*).

At **national level**, all major food security partners, including representatives from the government, are part of the IPC Technical Working Groups (TWG). The TWGs meet regularly and are responsible for conducting the IPC analysis.

Several resources partners have believed in IPC and supported its development and implementation throughout the years. Currently, the European Union is supporting IPC through the EU-FAO Partnership Programme pursuing "Information for nutrition food security and resilience for decision-making" (INFORMED). The UK Government and USAID has also been and continue to be critical by co-funding IPC until 2018.

In this framework, FAO has been an active promoter of IPC since 2004 when, through the Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) Somalia, FAO developed and launched the IPC approach and tools. FAO also promoted the roll-out of the IPC in other countries and particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, and led process to form, in 2007, the IPC Multi-Agency Partnership. FAO currently continue to play a key role in steering and coordinating the overall development and application of IPC worldwide.

Future perspectives: A fully Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Classification System

Important lessons have been learnt from the application of the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Classification. Various technical issues have also emerged from the implementation of the IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Classification and from piloting and roll-out of the IPC Acute Malnutrition. This process is laying the foundation for the consolidation of a fully *Integrated Food and Nutrition Security Phase Classification System*, which will harmonize the three IPC Classification systems to provide countries with a comprehensive framework to analyse the most important types of food insecurity.

How IPC contributes to the FAO Strategic Framework

The IPC Global Partnership has developed and is implementing a multi-year and results-based IPC Global Strategic Programme (2014–2018) which is aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework and particularly contributes two of FAO Strategic Programmes: *Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition* (SP1) and *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises* (SP5).

FURTHER INFORMATION

IPC is part of the work stream on *Food security and resilience*.
Find out more:

- Website - **www.ipcinfo.org**

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