

# **Constraints and Complexities of Information and Analysis: Data Planning in Famine-Risk Countries**

Findings and recommendations for food security analysis:  
South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen

March 2018

## About MQSUN+

MQSUN+ aims to provide the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) with technical services to improve the quality of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes. The project is resourced by a consortium of five leading non-state organisations working on nutrition. The consortium is led by PATH.

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## About this publication

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## Abbreviations

ACF	Action Contre La Faim (Action Against Hunger)
AIM WG	Assessment and Information Management Working Group
CFSS	Cadre Harmonisé
CILSS	Comité Permanent Inter-États de Lutte Contre La Sécheresses Dans Le Sahel (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel)
EFSA	Emergency Food Security Assessment
EFSNA	Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment
EW/EA	Early Warning/Early Action
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
FSNMS	Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System
GSU	Global Support Unit
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
LGA	local government area
MUAC	mid-upper arm circumference
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
NIWG	Nutrition Information Working Group
NSS	Nutrition Surveillance System
PESS	Population Estimation Survey of Somalia
SAM	severe acute malnutrition
SMART	Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
TWG	technical working group
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1. Executive Summary

After numerous attempts to define what constitutes a famine, the humanitarian community has agreed on a technical definition of famine and food security or nutrition emergencies of lesser severity. Nearly all observers and analysts agree to this definition—and it is included in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) v2.0. The classification of famine requires good quality and coverage of food security, nutrition and mortality data. However, humanitarian emergencies and potential famines are occurring in conflict contexts where access is constrained and security is poor, and hence the availability or quality of data does not reach the high standards required for an IPC analysis. This means that when there is not adequate coverage data and or quality data, the analysis process may be unable to reach firm evidence-based conclusions.

This report was commissioned by the Department for International Development, via MQSUN+, to identify critical short-term gaps in data availability or quality that might be addressed by timely donor action. Between July 2017 and January 2018, a study team comprised of members from Tufts University's Feinstein International Centre and Centre for Humanitarian Change conducted interviews with IPC or Cadre Harmonisé (CH) food security analysts in four famine-affected or threatened countries: South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen. For the most part, few such short-term recommendations emerged from the analysis. In the absence of early warning systems or other means of hotspot identification (short of IPC/CH analysis itself), there are few examples where additional short-term standby funds could help to proactively address data gaps. The causes of data gaps lie elsewhere.

In this report, we first provide an overview of the IPC/CH process in each country and highlight the common factors that constrain and challenge comprehensive and reliable food security analysis: technical and logistical capacity; data and partner coordination; “hot spot” identification and early warning systems; data quality and gaps; and funding. For each factor, we offer potential solutions. Overall, several key findings emerge.

## Key Findings

- In all four countries, collecting any high-quality data is a triumph against the odds of complex and ever-changing security, access and logistics constraints. Analysing this information demands multisectoral, multi-partner efforts that include all the main stakeholders and puts much emphasis on putting the Government in the lead. The fact that the CH/IPC teams are regularly able to collect food security and nutrition data from these complex zones is a testament to their ingenuity, determination and dedication to ensuring that evidence-based approaches are used to direct humanitarian response to the areas of the highest need.
- The limited technical capacity and high turnover of staff impede local, international and governmental partners' engagement in all stages of the IPC/CH process. Partners are often reported to have a limited understanding of the process and are often not incentivised to participate.
- Time pressure and limited coordination between different actors are impeding a more streamlined and collaborative data analysis process.
- Across the four countries, the systems for the identification of hotspots in order to ensure early response and/or to prioritise assessment resources are weak. Even when a hotspot is identified

in an ad hoc manner, most systems are not sufficiently flexible to respond with a prioritised and in-depth assessment.

- Insecurity and access are key constraints to data collection.
- There are geographical gaps in coverage of information, missing data for specific areas of the analysis—particularly mortality, but also nutrition at times and missing types of data e.g. qualitative data. Geographical gaps in data are reported to be largely due to insecurity, issues with political authorisation and a lack of funding.
- A significant data gap across all of the countries is gender-sensitive analysis of the data. Gender disaggregated data sets are available for nutrition. However, the IPC/CH analysis process does not consider the significance of this data.

In order to improve data availability and quality in food security analysis, there is an urgent need to:

1. Clarify the purpose of the IPC/CH analysis;
2. Build (in-country) technical capacity;
3. Strengthen the leadership and management of the IPC/CH processes;
4. Bolster linkages to early warning;
5. Invest in data quality and validation processes;
6. Foster a transparent, collaborative and participatory IPC/CH process;
7. Incorporate additional indicators and collaborating information; and
8. Institute safeguards against ‘false negatives.’

## 2. Background

This work was conducted as part of a larger study, *The Constraints and Complexities of Information and Analysis in Humanitarian Emergencies*. The component of the study described within this report was commissioned by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, via MQSUN+, to identify and address specific gaps in data collection and analysis processes—initially with the view that some of these might be addressed by rapid donor action in allocating resources to specific data collection tasks to ensure adequate data availability in the analysis of famine. In the end, relatively few examples of that kind of constraint emerged from the study. The study instead sought to understand what data collection plans exist, the methodologies being employed and the extent to which adequate and reliable information affect upcoming Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) or Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analyses in which famine might be the outcome.<sup>a</sup>

Between July 2017 and January 2018, a study team comprised of members from Tufts University's Feinstein International Center and the Centre for Humanitarian Change conducted interviews with IPC and CH food security analysts in four famine-affected or threatened countries: South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen. For each country, a member of the study team conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants from donor agencies, government, IPC technical working groups (TWGs) and/or international and domestic nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in or familiar with the IPC/CH process ([Annex 1](#)). In these interviews, we inquired about IPC/CH data collection exercises and their constraints, methodological innovations and other improvements to enable a more comprehensive and reliable IPC/CH analysis. Respondents were identified either based on their positions and engagement with the IPC/CH analysis or snowball sampling based on early interviews.

As noted, this study<sup>b</sup> was specifically commissioned to identify and analyse gaps or problem areas in the collection and analysis of data related to famine and make recommendations on how these might be addressed going forward. This report is not intended to be a general evaluation of IPC/CH processes. Since its inception in Somalia in the mid 2000s, IPC analysis has made significant gains in its focus, its rigour and its ability to accurately portray the severity of crisis, enabling a more appropriate and impartial response across dissimilar contexts. It has been widely adopted, and the incorporation of similar protocols into IPC into CH analysis in the past few years indicates the general level of acceptance of IPC as the state-of-the-art analysis tool for current status assessment of food insecurity in crises and emergencies worldwide. This report is not an attempt to undermine all these successes. It is, rather, an attempt to identify some of the particular technical problems that arise when IPC is used at the most extreme end of the scale—that is, to determine whether or not famine is occurring. Contemporary famines occur almost exclusively in conflict-affected and highly insecure areas, which creates significant problems for access, for data collection and for analysis. Some of these problems are more political in nature and are the subject of the larger study, *The Constraints and Complexities of Information and Analysis in Humanitarian Emergencies*. This study focuses on the more technical aspects of the analysis.

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<sup>a</sup> In Nigeria, the CH analytical process is utilised in lieu of the IPC to assess food security conditions (CILSS, 2014).

<sup>b</sup> The Tufts University Social, Behavioral and Economic Research Committee granted internal review board clearance for the overall research programme on May 31, 2017. Accordingly, no names of individuals appear in this report. Some of the responses are analysed by the category of respondent, but not by any other category.

### 3. Introduction

After numerous attempts to define what constitutes a famine, the humanitarian community has agreed on a technical definition of famine<sup>c</sup> and food security/nutrition emergencies of lesser severity. Nearly all observers and analysts agree upon this definition—and it is included in IPC v2.0 (IPC Global Partners, 2012). The classification of famine requires good-quality food security, nutrition and mortality data. However, humanitarian emergencies and potential famines occur within conflict contexts where access is constrained and security is poor; hence, the availability or quality of data does not reach the high standards required for an IPC analysis. This means that when there is not adequate data or high-quality data, the analysis process may be unable to reach firm conclusions.

In February 2017, a famine was declared in South Sudan. It was the first declaration by the United Nations (UN) and associated agencies in six years—since a famine was declared in Somalia in 2011—and only the second based on IPC analysis. However, in retrospect, Somalia may have been an exceptional case: There was a wealth of data and information, mostly produced by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET). Within other contexts, there is a dearth of such high-quality information, but cases have arisen in the past year that demonstrate the difficulties in analysis and declaration of famine. These cases include South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen; Somalia is also again in crisis as of early 2017.

Below, we summarise the major themes arising from a total of 51 interviews that were conducted via Skype with key informants. Information about South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen interviews are presented in Table 1. During each interview, detailed field notes were taken, noting phrases and terminology used by respondents to capture their narrative. Interview notes were then coded using the qualitative analytical software NVivo 11.4.2. An iterative coding approach was developed with codes determined both deductively from study instruments and inductively from transcripts. Emergent themes were then used to draft the initial outline of this report, with coded information categorised and synthesised accordingly.

Sources in the analysis are indicated in parentheses by two country-specific letters and their interview number. SS refers to South Sudan; So refers to Somalia; Ni refers to Nigeria; and Ye refers to Yemen.

**Table 1. Country-level data mapping interviews.**

Country	Time frame	Respondents	Agencies/Organisations
South Sudan	June 2017	14	10
Somalia	July-September 2017	15	11
Nigeria	September 2017	10	10
Yemen <sup>d</sup>	July 2017-January 2018	10	6
Global	December 2017-January 2018	2	2

<sup>c</sup> IPC uses the following *definition of famine*: (1) At least 20 per cent of the population with absolutely no access to food; (2) global acute malnutrition prevalence greater than 30 per cent; and (3) crude mortality rate equal to or greater than two people per ten thousand population per day (IPC Global Partners, 2012).

<sup>d</sup> Recruitment for the Yemen case study proved challenging for a few reasons. First, communication connections in Yemen are highly unreliable. It was difficult to establish and maintain connection via Skype or phone to conduct an interview. Second, many potential respondents were hesitant to discuss data concerns in Yemen, which were considered sensitive information, in fear that speaking with us would compromise their position in the country. Third, the deteriorating conditions in Yemen meant there were many competing priorities for humanitarian workers and responding to a research project was not top priority.

We first present a brief overview of the data collection and analysis processes in South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen. We then discuss the current challenges and constraints to food security analysis and potential areas for improvement in these four famine-affected or -threatened countries. We conclude with overarching recommendations.

## 4. Overview of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification/Cadre Harmonisé process

Although the CH process long predates IPC analysis, in recent years there has been a strong effort to harmonise the two analytical procedures along the lines developed by IPC. IPC was invented in Somalia in the mid-2000s as a means of graphically representing the severity of crisis within that context—in part due to security threats to humanitarian analysts and aid workers who were unable to explain adequately why some domains (all of which were governed by warlords in that era) were receiving more assistance than others. IPC—in particular, IPC for acute food insecurity—quickly grew into a sophisticated means of amalgamating different kinds of information into a coherent overall analysis of the severity of acute food insecurity, mapped according to either livelihood zones (in the case of Somalia) or localised administrative units (in the case of many other countries).

Since the objective is to map severity, IPC (and now CH in the same mode) relies heavily on the current status of selected outcome indicators: in particular, changes in livelihood status, prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition and crude mortality rate. With a set of agreed-upon thresholds in each of the three indicators, a technical definition of different “phases” of severity—including famine—was agreed upon. At lower IPC/CH phases (Phases 1–4), these indicators rarely align in precise fashion, leaving the judgment of lower phases to a process of convergence of evidence, with a fair amount of human judgment involved in assigning populations to a phase classification. The area is mapped according to the highest phase into which at least 20 per cent of the population falls. However, for famine (Phase 5), all three thresholds (food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality) have to be breached within the same time period for the same population.

In all four countries, it should be noted that collecting any high-quality data is a triumph against the odds of complex and ever-changing security, access and logistical constraints. The effort to collect and analyse these vital data is even more complicated. It demands multisectoral, multi-partner efforts that include all the main stakeholders and puts much emphasis on putting the government in the lead. The fact that IPC/CH teams are regularly able to collect food security and nutrition data from these complex zones is a testament to their ingenuity, determination and dedication to ensuring that evidence-based approaches are used to direct humanitarian response to the areas of highest need. The researchers acknowledge that in all four countries, those responsible for the process are constantly adapting and improving their processes and approaches to ensure data and analysis are available for decision-makers. The intention of this research is to support and strengthen this adaptive approach by identifying areas of the process that may benefit from extra attention and resources. Whilst the overall process is the same for all four countries, there are some differences and some context-specific challenges. These are briefly outlined below.

### 4.1. South Sudan

In South Sudan, collection of high-quality data is severely challenged both by security constraints and by some of the most challenging logistical conditions in the world. Despite this extremely challenging environment, the IPC in South Sudan continues to evolve and seek to improve. Data from the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) is the principal source of data for IPC in South

Sudan. The FSNMS is a World Food Programme (WFP)/Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) project that is implemented in collaboration with a number of UN (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and government partners. Enumerators are contributed by partners (local and international) within the Food Security and Livelihood Cluster. Whilst this approach helps in addressing some of the access constraints, there remain numerous technical and logistical capacity challenges. Quality control of the FSNMS process is managed by VAM, with some input from the Nutrition Information Working Group (NIWG) in the most recent rounds of the regular survey. There are a number of Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART) surveys conducted each year in South Sudan, surveying nutrition and mortality prevalence, mostly for operational purposes, and their inclusion in the IPC analysis is not systematic, as their timing with food security data collection is not fully synchronised. SMART surveys are supervised and coordinated by the UNICEF lead of the NIWG and fieldwork is predominantly managed by international NGOs, although a few surveys are conducted by local NGOs. Quality control of the SMART survey process is assured by the NIWG.

The latest round of the FSNMS (December 2017) has made several changes to collect representative food security data at the county level and to collect nutrition data (not mortality) to be representative at the state level. Some areas where SMART surveys have not been possible were oversampled to be representative at the county level. Given the loose structure of the IPC system in South Sudan, there are challenges in data planning, with frequent gaps and weaknesses in the process. Whilst stakeholders in the IPC process do participate, for most organisations (apart from WFP and FAO) planning of their data collection processes to be available for IPC analysis is a secondary priority.

Leadership and management of the loose alliance of stakeholders are extremely challenging and more attention to these areas of the process is warranted. Recurrent gaps in data, poor-quality data and gaps in geographical coverage, as well as tight assessment deadlines dictated by a seasonal view of analysis and humanitarian appeal deadlines, have frequently led to inconclusive statements about famine or populations in catastrophe. Availability of high-quality mortality data is the most significant challenge in South Sudan. The FSNMS does not collect mortality data due to logistical constraints; and often, nutrition agencies are forced to use the rapid SMART survey methodology for obvious reasons and mortality data collected is not representative.

The IPC analysis phase is organised at the state level, with a national validation workshop comprising all stakeholders, including state representatives, led by an IPC TWG. These processes are intended to build a technical consensus before the final analysis and classification is released. Once again, coordination, management and leadership of these multi-stakeholder, multi-level processes are extremely challenging, which has often resulted in a struggle to maintain technical consensus.

## 4.2. Somalia

As opposed to other contexts, the IPC data landscape in Somalia is mostly in the hands of a single analysis unit: FSNAU, which is part of FAO-Somalia. FSNAU is considered to be the Somalia IPC lead covering data planning, collection, analysis and phase setting. As one FSNAU respondent said, “We generate almost 100 per cent of the information that informs the IPC” (So105). FSNAU conducts seasonal assessments twice a year, focused on food security, nutrition and mortality data, to feed into the IPC analysis process. Data collection for both food security and nutrition/mortality

assessments is undertaken by qualified enumerators who are usually trained and supervised by FSNAU. These enumerators can be staff seconded from NGOs or hired by FSNAU specifically for the seasonal assessments. FSNAU establishes the data plan and then shares with partners through the relevant clusters. Quality assurance of the food security data products is assured by FSNAU and increasingly the Assessment and Information Management Working Group (AIM WG) of the Nutrition Cluster is responsible for nutrition data quality control. There are a wide range of other food security and nutrition assessments conducted by agencies in Somalia to meet their operational needs; however, these are rarely incorporated into the IPC analysis. Unresolved questions about quality of these additional data and analysis are a barrier to their inclusion, as is the varied timing and geographic coverage of the additional surveys. Technical consensus-building meetings are conducted in Somaliland and Mogadishu, with a national validation workshop held in Nairobi, led by FSNAU. All stakeholders are invited and some take part, but weaknesses in managing participation in these meetings, particularly including the government, reduce the effectiveness of the technical consensus-building process.

In Somalia, there has also been increasing transparency in the data collection and validation processes. The online dashboard maintained by FSNAU allows more partners to access data. In addition, the nutrition assessment protocols and data sets generated by FSNAU are validated by the Nutrition Cluster's AIM WG. However, ownership and transparency at the analysis and phase setting level vary. There is a cyclical issue with agencies not making the commitment to participate in the analysis workshops and therefore not owning the results and wanting to question them later.

### 4.3. Nigeria

The Comité Permanent Inter-États de Lutte Contre La Sécheresses Dans Le Sahel (CILSS)<sup>e</sup> developed the Cadre Harmonisé in the early 2000s, establishing both a technical committee and a steering committee in 2000. The aim of the CH is to assess food and nutrition insecurity amongst member states using a consensual analytical framework and classification scale. The CH gathers data on agricultural, nutrition, food security, meteorological and economic indicators (CILSS, 2014). It adopted the same classification system as the IPC system and uses the same five phases to categorise food security status. Unlike the IPC, the CH is regionally managed and regional coaches oversee the analysis process in each country. Data from at least three different food security data collection systems are used to populate the CH matrix: Household Economy Analysis, Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) and ad hoc reports from NGOs. For food security, the WFP/VAM-managed EFSA is the principal source of information and nutrition and mortality data come from the UNICEF-managed Nutrition Surveillance System (NSS), with some additional SMART surveys conducted by international NGOs. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) leads both the EFSA and NSS data management systems and also provides the enumerators. Analysis is conducted within WFP and UNICEF with involvement of the NBS. Quality control is managed by the two UN agencies in collaboration with the NBS. The data plan for NSS is pre-agreed, with three rounds of assessment each year. SMART surveys are organised based on operational needs, with some input on informing

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<sup>e</sup> The Comité Permanent Inter-États de Lutte Contre La Sécheresses Dans Le Sahel (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) was established in 1973 in response to a severe Sahelian drought. It aims to improve food security and mitigate the effects of drought by investing in research and policies. It has 13 member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. CILSS also monitors food security in Nigeria, though it is not a member state, due to its role in the Economic Community of West African States, of which Nigeria is a member.

the CH and NSS analysis. SMART survey plans are coordinated by the NSS. One of the principal challenges faced is in synchronising the availability of data from the EFSA and the NSS. Collecting data in difficult to access or inaccessible areas is also a major challenge.<sup>f</sup>

## 4.4. Yemen

In Yemen, the IPC is managed primarily by an IPC TWG with heavy involvement of the Food Security and Nutrition Clusters. As in other countries, the IPC TWG consists of a mix of national and international partners as well as relevant line ministries. The IPC TWG works with the clusters to establish and populate the data plan. The authorities in Yemen are intimately involved, as they chair/co-chair the clusters as well as require authorisation for all data collection processes and all field-level movements.

The current political/conflict situation in Yemen is particularly acute and is directly and significantly impeding the ability of humanitarian agencies to assess the condition and needs of the population. The latest IPC mainly used data from an Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA), which was performed in 20 out of 22 governorates. The EFSNA brings together food security, nutrition and mortality data, and therefore, represents the main part of the data collection and significantly contributes to synchronised timing of surveys. In the remaining two governorates of Al Maharah and Socotra (which are assumed to be the “better off” areas in Yemen), data from the 2014 Comprehensive Food Security Surveys was used. The EFSNA was implemented by WFP, FAO and UNICEF in conjunction with the governing authorities. The Yemen Nutrition Cluster also establishes a yearly SMART survey plan and aims to conduct one per governorate.<sup>g</sup> However, due to technical capacity constraints and bureaucratic impediments imposed by the authorities on data collection (most stringent with nutrition data), there are persistent gaps in the number of SMART surveys that are realised according to plan. There are also concerns about the quality of both the food security and nutrition data. Mortality data are consistently missing; available mortality data are considered to be of poor quality and consequently are not consistently included in the analysis.

In Yemen, IPC analysis workshops are held to cover each governorate. The workshops are highly collaborative, with many agencies participating. As noted by one respondent, “One area might take four hours to classify. It’s not just one person deciding; in the last meeting we had 65 people!” (Ye002). In-depth reports are produced for each governorate. The process is largely conducted internally, with some technical support from FAO. Each year, once the in-country analysis process is complete, a real-time quality review is requested from the IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) as a quality control measure. Last year, a twin TWG was established in Rome to support the analysis workshops in-country. However, it did not work very well, as the Yemeni stakeholders, particularly the governing authorities, felt it was something external and lacked adequate local contextual knowledge. The process for Yemen is very open and very closed at the same time. Inside Yemen, the analysis workshops see high participation from both international and national organisations as well as the government. However, outside engagement with the process, even by the GSU, is unwelcome and seen as intrusive.

<sup>f</sup> Representativeness in inaccessible areas is dealt with in depth in the larger case study for Nigeria (forthcoming).

<sup>g</sup> Historically, the cluster has focused on only the 20 most vulnerable governorates, although in 2017 they added the remaining two into the plan, stating the need for updated information.

## 5. Challenges and constraints to food security analysis

Below, we discuss the factors identified that challenge or constrain comprehensive and reliable IPC/CH analyses in the four famine-affected or threatened countries. For each factor, we discuss country-specific and cross-country observations and suggest potential solutions. Where data are available, we also highlight the gender implications of these findings. These factors are not presented in any particular order.

### 5.1. Technical and logistical capacity

In all four countries, the limited technical capacity and high turnover of staff impede local, international and governmental partners' engagement in all stages of the IPC/CH process. Partners therefore are often reported to have a limited understanding of the process and are often not incentivised to participate. In all four countries, certain partners (e.g. UN food security agencies) specifically invest in technical food security analysis processes and several international NGOs do the same in nutrition and mortality analysis. UN nutrition agency and international NGO investment in technical capacity for analysis is more varied across the four countries. In all countries, except for Somalia, the IPC/CH process is organised as a loose coalition of stakeholders with consensus-building being the glue to achieve an evidence-based analysis. In three of the countries, South Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia and to a lesser extent in Yemen, there is an ambiguity amongst non-UN stakeholders about the value they place on the IPC/CH process and therefore the priority they give to invest resources in the data planning, data collection and analysis processes. This observation is less true for the UN food security agencies. In all four countries, there are ample opportunities to invest further in international, local and governmental partners' technical and logistical capacity to first, ensure their understanding of the IPC/CH process, and second, facilitate a more genuine engagement with and ownership of the process.

#### 5.1.1. Local and national partners

Within two of the contexts (South Sudan and Somalia), there is some reliance on local partners to assist in data collection and assessments. This is particularly related to their access to areas often "inaccessible" to international partners. However, local partners often lack the technical and logistical capacity to, for example, collect high-quality data that can meet the standard set by the IPC/CH process. IPC/CH-relevant assessments and surveys are carried out by local partners in addition to their regular programmatic work. In Somalia, respondents noted that it was a major challenge for local NGOs to juggle the additional workload, as they are always in "firefighting" mode (So101).

In many cases, there is a lack of trust between the international and local stakeholders in the IPC process. Local partners are regularly contracted to conduct surveys in very complex areas and their subcontracts include pre-training to use the tools. However, at times the resulting survey data are not of high quality. Clusters often provide data collection tools directly to the local partners and there is little leeway for local partners to include other contextual information, which they believe is pertinent to understand the situation. It is also unclear if enumerators have a firm understanding of

the objective of the exercise and are correctly interpreting the question within such surveys and assessments. There are still suspicions that some “enumerators sit under a mango tree and fill out the survey on their own” (SS104). There are limited numbers of capable enumerators and managers who can be entrusted to oversee food security and nutrition data collection processes and deliver high-quality data. A more strategic view of a local partnership would build trust between stakeholders and could increase the capacity, particularly of supervisors, to conduct the surveys and produce high-quality data.

In two countries, there is also a high level of turnover in the limited number of local partner staff members. Moreover, the insecure contexts further compound the limited availability of qualified in-country personnel. A respondent from the South Sudan case study shared, “I just planned a survey in one of the counties in Jonglei. After planning and making materials available—when I went to the area, all of the enumerators had to go fight! You could not find anyone to do a survey! They had other priorities” (SS110).

A few local partners noted that after their submission of the survey or assessment results, the data just disappeared and they had no idea how, if at all, the information was used in the IPC/CH analysis. Whilst local partners are involved in the data collection and, in many countries, in the data validation and technical consensus phase, there are significant weaknesses in their understanding of the process and technical capacity to influence the consensus. Invitations to analysis workshops and phase classification meetings are open; however, local partners’ engagement is still limited and the partnership with international actors often lacks in trust, capacity and understanding. In South Sudan, respondents noted that data entry, cleaning and analysis were often completed without local partners’ participation. As a respondent from Somalia noted, “We always have more participation during fieldwork rather than analysis” (So105). Insecurity may also limit partner participation in the analysis process. In Somalia, for example, insecurity forced regional analysis workshops to be held in Hargeisa, which limited participation from those in Mogadishu and Nairobi. Funds are also limited to cover the costs affiliated with inviting various partners to attend such workshops.

### **5.1.2. International partners**

In South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen, the IPC/CH processes rely heavily on international agency staff for the technical leadership of the process and in Yemen and South Sudan for the leadership and management of the process. In Nigeria, for example, CH “coaches” oversee the analysis process and phase classifications. Coaches are from the region (not Nigeria) and trained by CILSS. They rotate throughout the region twice yearly to support the CH processes. Although CILSS’ position is that they invest heavily in the CH process in order to build capacity, the feeling from respondents is that the analysis capacity does not necessarily stay in-country. Even though CILSS members are expected to facilitate the CH process in each involved country, CILSS itself is a fairly “lean” organisation in terms of human resources. CILSS faces significant time constraints with respect to how much time it can commit to each country, as well as its ability to support in-country capacity-building. Similarly, in the other two countries, there is heavy reliance on international experts to manage and co-lead the process as well as provide technical oversight and conduct the IPC/CH data collection, analysis and phase classification. Moreover, it appears that some international partners also lack the technical training and understanding of quantitative and qualitative tools, methodology, sampling and data cleaning processes used in the IPC process. Consequently, temporary consultants are often contracted to support the process.

In Somalia, the process is quite different. IPC planning, collection and analysis are almost the sole purview of the FSNAU. Both international and national partners are then requested to contribute

resources (e.g. staff and logistics, amongst others) to support the surveys, complemented by the hiring of Somali enumerators, many of whom support the data collection process each season. There remains a difference of opinion between FSNAU and other stakeholders concerning the capacity of other international or national organisations to collect high-quality data. Consequently, the vast majority of data used for the IPC analysis are planned, collected and analysed within FSNAU.

There is a critical need to invest in in-country capacity building to reduce the level of dependence on international technical staff to conduct the IPC/CH process. A respondent familiar with the South Sudanese context shared: “We need to build the capacity of the local staff. So that when expats like me leave, there is no major gap, and they can still continue to do all these assessments. We rely mostly on expats to do all these assessments in most agencies. Some agencies do not even have permanent staff, they hire consultants—you cannot rely on them” (SS110). The urgency of making such an investment to build local capacity is further highlighted by the rapid turnover of international staff members, the ongoing challenge of finding qualified international personnel who are willing to work within insecure contexts and security constraints that limit these international partners’ ability to travel throughout the country.

### 5.1.3. Governmental partners

The government’s level of engagement in the IPC/CH process varies across the four countries.

In **Somalia**, there has been “a lot of challenge in getting the government thoughtfully and genuinely involved” (So101). High turnover of government personnel is a challenge: “key people in ministries ‘and emergency coordination bodies’ change so often—even every few months. We start over and over again [to engage them]” (So101). It is expected that these high turnovers will stabilise in the near future. It will then be critical for FSNAU to invest in more long-term capacity building (for example, job mentoring and supervision), which go beyond the current two-week development workshop approach. There is also a limited understanding of the IPC process; one respondent noted, “We have government partners who are not IPC conversant. . . . [C]ommunicating results can be challenging as there are decision-makers who are not exposed to IPC and their technical staff are not certified” (So105).

In **South Sudan**, the NBS is responsible for determining the sampling frame and takes a strong leadership role in the IPC process, in particular in the technical consensus-building phase and in chairing the TWG. However, similar to the other three countries, there are capacity gaps that prevent a more meaningful engagement. The already limited capacity of the government deteriorated further after the December 2013 crisis. Respondents noted a big shift in government personnel. High turnover within ministries is also a major challenge in getting the government more engaged in the IPC process. It was not uncommon, as a respondent shared, for a large number of participants to leave a training part way through due to political shifts, disrupting the entire exercise. Moreover, state-level government interest in engagement appears to be limited to the data collection domain, with few incentives to become involved in the data validation or analysis process. Currently, the government has some input on what information to collect, where data can be collected and has oversight over instruments, but rarely provides feedback. As one respondent noted, “They just really accept whatever is presented to them” (SS111). However, when Phase 5 outcomes are indicated, higher levels of government start to take a much stronger part in directing the process.<sup>h</sup> Similar to the other three countries, there is also limited understanding of the IPC process amongst South

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<sup>h</sup> Discussed in full in the related case study for South Sudan.

Sudanese government personnel, apart from staff within the NBS and a few key staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management.

In **Nigeria**, the government has an ambivalent engagement with the CH process. A respondent noted, “[It] harks back to how the CH was introduced in the country. Government does not feel completely implicated, they never say no but it does not mean that they want what is being offered” (Ni109). It is likely that government institutions at both the state and federal levels will be more engaged in this upcoming IPC process, given the crisis in the northeast, to take the spotlight for ‘doing something for the crisis’. Respondents noted that in many ways, there was a sense of resentment towards the CH as it now labels Nigeria as a famine-risk country, along with Somalia, Yemen and South Sudan. The government does not appreciate such categorisation; they see themselves as a prosperous and successful country. There is also fear that the opposition government will use this information—the quality of which the standing government disputes—to mobilise support for the next election. State-level government involvement in data planning, collection and validation is limited, with a particular focus on the validation process. National-level involvement is centred on the NBS, with additional involvement through the Ministry of Health and the National Programme on Food Security. Turnover is not a major problem, but work is ongoing to build a wide base of technical capacity to lead and participate in the CH.

In **Yemen**, compared to the other three countries, government partners play a much larger and authoritative role in the IPC process. They are involved in nearly all aspects of the IPC process, from data planning to analysis. They chair or co-chair all clusters and working groups. The Ministries of Health and Agriculture/Planning are involved in all SMART surveys and food security assessments, respectively. Political authorisation is also required for any type of data collection as well as physical access to data collection locations/target populations. The stringent control by the governing authority on any data collection leads to delayed and/or partial data collection. In addition, NGOs and potentially the IPC process are being used as a political tool to recognise the political authority of both controlling entities in Yemen.

#### Potential solutions:

- a) **Clarify the role of IPC/CH within the humanitarian effort.** Amongst all stakeholders, there is a need to clarify the priority given to dedicating resources (time, money, human resources) to the IPC/CH process. Ensure there is a clear understanding of the balance between collecting relevant data for operational processes and for IPC/CH. This will involve compromises in timing, geographic focus and indicators used for both the operational and IPC/CH processes.
- b) **Invest in in-country technical capacity.** Invest further in long-term capacity-building efforts to develop in-country expertise for the IPC/CH process for local and government partners to lead and constructively take part in all stages of the IPC/CH process. Key international agencies should invest further in ensuring that there is longer-term in-country and in-agency technical capacity to ensure that the IPC/CH output is an evidence-based, humanitarian, community-wide technical consensus. Ensure that the wider stakeholders (local, international and government) understand the IPC/CH process and see the value added in their participation to help foster their ownership of the process.
- c) **Improve logistical support.** Provide local and government partners with the financial, material and technical support necessary to engage in all stages of the IPC/CH process.

## 5.2. Coordination of data and partners

### 5.2.1. Data planning

As discussed above, data planning is managed in a large variety of ways across countries and sectors. Data planning is influenced by other operational priorities of the data collection agencies, and the degree to which there is alignment between their operational and IPC/CH objectives is highly varied across countries, organisations and sectors. As a result, there are weaknesses in the efficient use of resources, identification and filling of data gaps and prioritisation of geographical coverage of assessments. Across the four countries, the responsibility of the IPC/CH TWG, and involvement of the Food Security and Nutrition Clusters, humanitarian aid managers (e.g. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) and the government in data planning are highly variable and also relate to the priorities given to IPC/CH as opposed to operational needs. For the most part, data planning and collection are dominated by a few key agencies (WFP, FAO, UNICEF), whose primary aim is to collect data for their own operational purposes, although WFP and FAO are also the agencies at which there is greatest alignment between their operational needs and the need to publish IPC/CH analysis. Amongst other agencies, interviewees tended to note that IPC/CH's analysis is primarily to make large-scale statements about the scope and severity of the humanitarian crisis across the whole country. Their perspective of their own operational surveys was that these provide the key evidence for decision-making, particularly in non-food sectors. The exception here is FSNAU in Somalia, which exists solely for data collection and analysis.

There is limited flexibility in the data planning process. Despite operating in some of the most complex and changeable environments, existing data plans have little contingency planning. In nutrition, Action Contre La Faim (ACF, Action Against Hunger) and a few other international NGOs have had occasional roles in conducting SMART surveys at short notice to fill gaps. Challenges have been experienced in coordinating this role, but it remains appropriate for these environments. The advent of EFSNA, EFSNA and similar food security surveys and their increasing domination of the IPC evidence gathering process allows for geographic flexibility but does not allow flexibility in timing of the analysis. Tight operational deadlines require that analysis be completed within a few days or weeks. In South Sudan, but also in Nigeria to a lesser extent, new methodologies of collecting supporting data are reaching scale and the integration of these processes into the IPC/CH processes will also allow flexibility in terms of access and logistical constraints (e.g. REACH Area of Origin type–assessments). Improving data planning has several knock-on effects for IPC/CH: improved synchronicity between data collection and analysis schedules; more collaboration in data collection; improvements in data completeness—both geographical coverage and indicator diversity; and increased ownership by a wider diversity of stakeholders.

In **South Sudan**, data planning and collection remain inflexible to respond to acute hot spots and/or fluctuating access issues. In some cases, the areas of concern that require more in-depth assessment can be identified in advance and therefore provisions made in the data plan. In other cases, the custodians of the data collection plan struggle to be flexible to include newly accessible areas or hot spots due to requirements for security clearance, logistics and financial and human resources that can be lengthy to negotiate. The significant logistical constraints that are inherent in operating in infrastructure-poor South Sudan can also compromise timeliness of the process, both in terms of getting assessment teams to the ground and enabling them to move around, and in terms of a functioning communication network to relay the information in a timely manner.

In the case of **Somalia**, partners feel that there are opportunities to make the data planning process even more participatory and collaborative. As in the other three countries, circumstances change constantly in Somalia. Stakeholders point out that evidence gathering priorities constantly change and that data from their own operational analysis is valuable in triangulation and supporting analysis. The Nutrition Cluster has established a comprehensively costed survey plan, including both quantitative and qualitative assessment needs. The assessments are largely to respond to the operational needs of individual agencies, although some are more sectoral in nature (e.g. country-wide micronutrient assessments). Sometime it is not clear how these assessments will contribute to the IPC data matrix. Compromises remain to be made both within the data planning process of the Nutrition Cluster (and Food Security Cluster) and in the FSNAU data planning and collection processes, to ensure as holistic as possible IPC analysis whilst at the same time providing the right evidence for more detailed decision-making. Finally, some agencies collect information that is largely qualitative in nature, and the IPC analysis framework appears unable to accommodate qualitative or causal information for nutrition.

In **Nigeria**, the principal issue for data planning is better synchronisation of the EFSA and NSS data collection, analysis and reporting processes. Twice yearly, EFSA are timed with a strong focus on seasons and the humanitarian appeal process. The thrice yearly NSS also has a seasonal focus but a longer-term vision of developing both an immediate picture of needs as well as a better understanding of trends and their implications for programming for under-nutrition and mortality prevention. In order to address the difference in timing of data collection, analysis and reporting between the two systems, some compromises will have to be made by both systems. However, the likely compromises are not expected to greatly affect the individual outputs of each system and a compromise will significantly strengthen the CH analysis. Operational data provided by NGOs are used if the data are considered of “good enough” quality and help to fill a gap in understanding.

In **Yemen**, the extreme security, access and administrative barriers to data collection and analysis have significantly affected the ability of the humanitarian community to regularly represent the extreme needs of the population of Yemen. The data planning process is the strongest of the four countries in terms of the involvement of all stakeholders, including of all required indicators and having a clear balance between IPC and operational objectives. Flexibility to take more of a snapshot approach to representing the needs, severity and priorities for need in Yemen appears to be the next challenge.

### **5.2.2. Data collection**

In all four countries, the data collection processes are collaborative in terms of resources, logistics, human resources and funding. There are ample opportunities to improve collaboration on data collection, especially in Nigeria and Somalia. A strong collaborative process can strengthen trust and ownership of the technical consensus and can improve the quality and flexibility of the data collection process.

Data collection for non-core IPC/CH indicators and collaborating information is very weak across all four countries. The availability of data from sectors such as health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is poor and the inclusion of analysis of drivers of the crisis (conflict in particular) is limited to non-existent. Greater attention is required to ensure that such data are collected and used in collaboration with the principal IPC/CH sectors and actors.

### 5.2.3. Data timing

Time pressure and limited coordination between different actors are impeding a more streamlined and collaborative data analysis process in all four countries. Timing issues were reported across the countries. As discussed above, a combination of seasonal and operational constraints impact on data availability, coverage and quality across sectors, in particular for nutrition (and mortality). All four countries use seasons as their main timing guide for food security and nutrition. Yet, in this environment of complex causality and change, interviewees reported significant worries about large spikes in need between seasonal analysis and even between data collection and data analysis/reporting processes.

**South Sudan** respondents reported that in many cases, significant new information becomes available between and during the IPC analysis processes. New suspected hot spots rapidly emerge between the analysis cycles. Respondents reported that especially in the most at-risk areas, the livelihoods and survival strategies of affected populations were not as strongly linked to seasons, as previously shown. Humanitarian cycles of food distribution and conflict events were reported to be much bigger drivers of fluctuations in food security needs.

In **Somalia**, the large-scale food security and nutrition assessments by FSNAU are technically timed to correspond to the period just following the two main rainy seasons. However, due to the significant time required to survey the entire country twice per year, there is a several-month timespan over which the assessments take place. Shocks that may occur during the data collection months could compromise the comparability of results. Once the data are collected, there is a significant time pressure to validate and release the information as soon as possible. All the nutrition data collected by FSNAU for the IPC has to be validated by the AIM TWG of the Nutrition Cluster. This can mean that the group has to review anywhere from 28 to 40 data sets within a very short time frame twice per year, which often results in delays in reporting on the analysis of up to eight weeks, although FSNAU has invested significant amounts of effort in shortening these gaps between data collection and analysis reporting.

The CH analysis process in **Nigeria** experiences a significant time pressure due to the fact that the CH is a regionally administered process and CH mentors tour around the countries in the region supporting each country's analysis. The facilitators are only in-country for two weeks, which provides a short time frame to review all the Nigeria data. The short time frame can compromise the analysis process if there are disagreements, given the limited time for further investigations to feed into final phase designation.

In **Yemen**, the data timeliness issue pertains to time lags between data planning, collection and analysis, resulting in potentially outdated data being used to populate the analysis framework. The time lags seem to be largely associated with two factors. The first is often lengthy negotiations for political authorisation—to conduct the assessment, to access the different locations and to validate the results. The second factor is due to questionable quality of data. There is evidence of nutrition data in particular being delayed due to quality concerns. In Yemen, the reasons for time delays (whether political or due to quality) are not transparent and prevent the humanitarian community from understanding the issues complicating the process.

#### Potential solutions:

- a) **Comprehensively estimate the costs of data collection plans.** The clusters and IPC/CH TWG should identify their sectoral needs and establish costed survey plans which include quantitative

and qualitative needs. This will support more systematic coordination of inter- and intra-cluster/sector needs—both those relevant to the IPC/CH and beyond.

- b) **Synchronise sectoral data collection and analysis schedules.** As much as possible, the data collection schedules for food security, nutrition and mortality should be synchronised so that the IPC analysis framework is populated with information from the same time frame. In addition, the data collection and analysis schedules should be synchronised to ensure a relevant analysis. Compromises will have to be made and a clearer stakeholder understanding of the balance of operational and IPC/CH objectives is required.
- c) **Ensure greater flexibility in the data planning, collection and analysis process.** Changing circumstances, priorities, access, security, administrative and logistical barriers demand greater flexibility in the whole IPC/CH process in these more extreme crises. Flexibility is required to address emerging gaps and barriers in data collection. Flexibility is also required to make provisions for smaller-scale analysis of emerging needs or sudden improvements in access to survey certain areas, which may occur between the standard analysis seasons.
- d) **Ensure adequate preparation before the analysis process.** In both Nigeria and South Sudan, there is evidence that the data matrix is being populated as the analysis process is ongoing. This slows down the analysis process and puts a time pressure on technical experts who may have specifically come in for the analysis and phase setting steps. Populating the matrix should be a preparatory step before analysis in order to ensure an efficient process.

### 5.3 “Hot spots” and early warning

Across the four countries, the systems for the identification of hot spots in order to ensure early response and/or to prioritise assessment resources are weak. Where they do exist, they seem to lack ownership by key stakeholders and be disconnected from early response. Even when a hot spot is identified in an ad hoc manner, most data planning and collection systems are not sufficiently flexible to respond with a prioritised and in-depth assessment.

In **South Sudan**, there is no systematic means of identifying hot spots. There are different (ad hoc) approaches taken within the nutrition and the food security work. These processes often involve clusters and to a greater or lesser extent depend on individuals, timing and urgency. Priorities tend to be reactive and identified late (e.g. identification of need for a better survey in Ayod). Given the rapidly changing security situation, it appears that the planning and implementation of surveys and assessments are not as flexible and proactive as the situation sometimes requires. Mechanisms such as the funding of SMART surveys by the UN and other donors are reported to have been useful but not always to have been linked to the hot spot analysis to generate evidence for IPC purposes. This is evidenced by the use of contracted capacity for surveys not linked to individual organisations’ operational requirements for data; for example, an international NGO contracted to conduct SMART surveys even in areas where they do not deliver services. This has been reported to work well to fill pre-agreed gaps but does not have enough flexibility to respond quickly to changes. Once the IPC round has been completed, there appears to be no consideration of follow-up to fill evidence gaps and develop a better understanding of priority areas.

In **Somalia**, FSNAU’s mandate is to provide nutrition and food security data for the entire country and there is not a specific focus on only “hot spot” areas. Operational partners have their own systems for hot spot identification, often through review of their own monthly reports. If potential hot spots are identified by agencies or clusters before the scheduled FSNAU assessments, it is up to that agency/cluster to fill the information gap, as FSNAU feels it is difficult for them to adjust their plan once it is set and the process is “in motion”. Other examples of hot spots include ‘hot’ issues such as

large-scale displacement of populations where a more flexible earlier assessment of their situation may allow more appropriate evidence-based decision-making.

FSNAU has an Early Warning/Early Action (EW/EA) dashboard that was first tested in the 2016/17 drought. In July 2017, a report was published reviewing how the EW/EA dashboard was being used for drought response (Oxfam International, 2017). There was a clear consensus amongst stakeholders interviewed that the dashboard had value. It was regarded as a step in the right direction, that it could be used to help flag a deteriorating situation that required a scale-up of humanitarian support. However, in order to achieve this, the dashboard needed to be updated in a timely manner and the accountability framework, which clearly outlined each agency's responsibilities for early action, had to function. As of the finalisation of this report (March 2018), the most recent data available from the dashboard were from December 2017. It is worth noting that no respondents interviewed for this piece of research mentioned the dashboard as being used for EW/EA, supporting one of the report's findings that there is need to generate more awareness and buy-in around the dashboard.

In **Nigeria**, there is no systematic means of identifying hot spots for food security, as the approach appears to be to survey all accessible areas in one survey round. There are few other food security assessments or surveillance outside of data collection for the CH process, with the exception of FEWSNET. With respect to nutrition information, the NSS has completed its fourth round. In the third round, UNICEF and the Information Management Working Group agreed on hot spots for implementing small-scale nutrition surveys in order to get more detailed information on the nutritional status of young children. ACF also did some SMART surveys based on this identification of hot spots for nutrition. Criteria for hot spots included lack of adequate detailed coverage by surveillance systems and secondary information pointing to a possible poor nutritional situation. Hot spots are also identified through ad hoc means, whereby implementing agencies alert to worrying/deteriorating conditions in their operational areas. However, the results of the small-scale surveys showed very similar findings to those from the NSS so this approach was not used in the fourth round. ACF is still doing two to three concurrent surveys as surveillance for programme purposes. Currently, a nationwide early warning system is being planned for Nigeria to address some of these issues.

In **Yemen**, a famine early warning system was developed by FAO and the Food Security Cluster in order to offer higher geographical granularity and be able to detect areas requiring additional attention for in-depth assessment. Unfortunately, due to the active war in Yemen the establishment of the system was put on hold in 2017. FAO has indicated that they do monitor market data as well as weather stations through the Yemen Food Security Information System project, in order to help prioritise areas for more in-depth analysis and to highlight these concerns to the Food Security Cluster. The Yemen Food Security and Nutrition Clusters regularly produce joint 'severity' analysis looking at programme coverage and progress against targets, and using any relevant surveillance data to identify priority areas for joint programming, such as supplementary feeding. This process—although designed for operational prioritisation—could be adapted to help identify hot spots for data collection and analysis.

#### **Potential solutions:**

- a) **Invest in proactive early warning systems.** Each country should establish an early warning system that is able to identify priority areas for more efficient use of assessment resources. If a system already exists, there needs to be increased ownership and usage to ensure it is functioning as intended. These do not necessarily need to be traditional famine early warning systems—they

could be based on unique models or contemporary technology. However, if hot spot identification is left to the IPC/CH process, it is by definition not early warning. In addition to having an early warning system, there needs to be a clear process in place for the reactivity of both assessment and programming to respond to it.

- b) **Link early warning and data planning.** Many of the issues pertaining to timeliness across the countries can be solved in a functioning and reactive early warning system as well as better data planning and coordination.

## 5.4. Access/security constraints

Insecurity and access are key constraints to data collection in Somalia, Nigeria, Yemen and South Sudan. Whilst all of the countries suffer from environmental shocks such as heavy rains and floods, which periodically reduce accessibility to certain areas, environmentally caused access issues did not feature in most respondents' discussion of data collection constraints. Insecurity is the major cause of access constraints that lead to data quality concerns through a variety of mechanisms: lack of ability to supervise field teams adequately; inability to collect the full complement of food security, nutrition and mortality indicators; over-reliance on local partners that have varying degrees of technical and logistical capacities; and necessity to resort to alternative data collection methodologies, such as mobile data collection with potentially limited ability to triangulate the information. The stakeholder groups in the four countries display varying degrees of appetite for dealing with security risks. Donors and diplomats display the lowest appetite, followed by UN agencies, international NGOs and then national NGOs. The result is that national NGOs, which may have less technical capacity, are often deployed to the most insecure areas to perform assessments.

Across the countries, transparency with respect to access varies based on how much of an area is inaccessible. There are often islands of access within a larger area of inaccessibility. In a state of fluctuating access, it is often these islands that are assessed (food security and nutrition) and then inferences are made regarding the remaining inaccessible area. In each country, this leads to a generalisation of the findings collected from the accessible population to the rest of the inaccessible area. The representativeness of these data for the whole area is highly questionable, as inaccessible areas are often worse off than accessible ones. Some respondents raised concerns that access is used as an excuse for when an agency is unable to collect certain data or to secure data of a certain quality.

The security situation in **South Sudan** is unpredictable. Access changes on a daily or weekly basis, as pockets open and close depending on the movement of the population and the shifting front lines of the conflict. In addition, South Sudan suffers from a pervasive lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, which complicates access efforts. Planes, helicopters and walking long distances must frequently be employed in order to reach much of the population. In some areas of South Sudan, access has to be negotiated and that alone can be a two-week process. Therefore, access can be dependent on political will; and even if it is granted, safety upon arrival is not necessarily be guaranteed.

In **Somalia**, poor humanitarian access in Al Shabaab-controlled parts of the country has been a chronic problem, with some areas having been inaccessible for many years. For inaccessible areas, FSNAU has established a system of collecting food security data via key informant interviews. When these data are used in the IPC analysis framework, the data are given a lower reliability score than

data collected in other ways. For nutrition and mortality information, currently there is no possibility of remote data collection methodologies, as these assessments require household surveys.

A lack of access is usually known in advance due to the ongoing military operations against Boko Haram in certain areas of **Nigeria**, although acute insecurity events can also occur. Access issues can significantly hamper the ability of agencies to assess and programme in some rural areas of key local government areas (LGAs) in northeastern Nigeria.

The current situation in **Yemen** is particularly acute and is directly and significantly impeding the ability of humanitarian agencies to understand the state of the population. Towards the end of 2017, the war escalated, resulting in evacuation of most international personnel and halting almost all data collection activities in Yemen. The November 2017 IPC could not take place due to lack of data. Additionally, data collection in Yemen suffers from political restrictions, with authorisation being required (and not always granted) for any data collection exercise as well as the right to access the population to be assessed.

#### Potential solutions:

- a) **Ensure transparency of IPC products with regard to access.** Insecurity and access issues are unavoidable in the four countries for the foreseeable future. However, the IPC products should be more transparent with respect to the degree of access available in certain areas. The maps should reflect if only parts of a zone were accessible so that humanitarian actors can gain a concrete idea as to the situation of sub-populations within a particular zone.
- b) **Negotiate access with authorities to ensure assessment and response.** Coordinating with the relevant stakeholders (military and political authorities or other gatekeepers) in order to communicate the value of the assessment and analysis process might help mitigate issues with access to some vulnerable populations.
- c) **Adopt new data collection protocols for areas of restricted access.** Methodologies such as rapid SMART surveys can help to ensure representative nutrition data are available in complex-access environments. The new IPC Technical Manual and Toolkit V.3 are being finalised and a new tool for data collection in extreme circumstances has been agreed. This new tool could be considered for use prior to the final release of the entire new version of the manual and toolkit. Mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) surveys connected to vaccination campaigns have been possible. However, there is still some local uncertainty as how to use these data in an IPC analysis. Guidance from IPC/CH technical advisors could better ensure the inclusion of less standard indicators in assessment. Tools such as the Area of Origin Survey used by REACH in South Sudan and Nigeria could be further tested in other countries and guidance developed on how to include its data in the IPC/CH analysis.

## 5.5. Data quality and gaps

Issues with data quality and gaps can severely compromise the information used in the data analysis process and the setting of IPC/CH phases. All four countries struggled with gaps in geographical coverage of information, missing types of data (e.g. qualitative) and missing data for specific areas of the analysis—particularly mortality, but also nutrition at times. Geographical gaps in data are reported to be largely due to insecurity, issues with political authorisation and a lack of funding. As time requirements for nutrition and mortality data collection tend to be greater, these are typically the first to be dropped when there are severe time and access constraints. Gaps in diversity of indicators (WASH and health in particular) are common, in part because of technical capacity, but in part simply because they are not demanded by IPC/CH analysis. A key theme across the interviews is

the inflexibility of the IPC analysis framework to accommodate qualitative information, which could enrich the analysis.

### 5.5.1. Food security and nutrition data

The processes for validation or quality control of data vary significantly amongst food security, nutrition and mortality. SMART surveys are the global gold standard for assessing the nutrition status of a population within an emergency context. SMART surveys have clear data plausibility checks and validation protocols and nutrition and mortality indicators have very clear, globally recognised case definitions. In all countries, the cluster/sector TWG for nutrition information has the mandate to verify and clear methodologies, analysis and results of any nutrition survey conducted. Tools and guidance for this verification are well developed, and support from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others is available. Food security data quality control is conducted in-house by the UN agency most responsible for the large-scale surveys. There is no similar industry standard for data quality checks on food security surveys as there is with SMART surveys, and there is no group process of data validation as there is with SMART surveys.

In **South Sudan**, access issues and technical capacity compromise data quality and completeness. As mentioned above, access is constrained by insecurity and a lack of infrastructure. Therefore, assessments require significant logistical investment, flexibility and a strong risk management framework. Respondents reported several issues of poor technical capacity to conduct these surveys, especially the dearth of technically well-trained supervisors.

The complexities of South Sudan mean that funding can be another constraint to data completeness. Each year, there are gaps in both food security and nutrition data that are attributed to funding constraints. The discussion above describes some of the issues experienced in data planning and collection. The associated recommendations emphasise the need for a better, budgeted data planning mechanism with an emphasis on flexibility through contingency plans.

Data quality varies widely between assessments, depending on which agency is collecting the data. In 2016, a MUAC assessment in one county indicated a high burden of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). However, a follow-up assessment by another partner in the same area one month later found a much lower burden. Such a swift reduction within the short time frame is not possible unless there are significant SAM-associated deaths. There were no other sources of information to verify the MUAC findings. Other data collected in extremely challenging circumstances, including food security data, suffer from the same issues of supervision, technical capacity, representativeness and quality. Suggested approaches to move forward on these issues are discussed above.

In **Somalia**, FSNAU's mandate is to collect and analyse food security and nutrition data for all of Somalia. They use trained enumerators to collect the data through large-scale surveys after the two main rainy seasons. For most areas, there is good coverage of both food security and nutrition data. In some areas, FSNAU's coverage is limited by security constraints (mainly in southern Somalia). In these areas, it is not possible to collect primary nutrition and mortality data. In a few cases, FSNAU works with an international NGO they trust to conduct a SMART survey. If there is a health facility or nutrition site operating, FSNAU may look at trend data emerging from these facilities. Some quality issues occur with FSNAU nutrition data. Stunting data are sometimes not validated (likely due to issues with age identification) and there can be issues with mortality data. Food security data in areas that FSNAU cannot access are usually collected via key informant interviews conducted over the phone and the review of any available secondary data.

In **Nigeria**, the principal constraint remains the synchronisation of nutrition and mortality data with food security data collection and reporting. This issue is extensively discussed above.

In **Yemen**, EFSNA aims to cover 20 out of 22 governorates. However, data quality and completeness in Yemen remain a significant challenge. Whilst most years are characterised by issues with data availability, 2017 was particularly acute. The escalating conflict towards the end of 2017 meant that almost no primary data collection was possible and the minimum data requirements for IPC were not met, leading to the cancellation of the planned November IPC. Prior to the escalation of the conflict in 2017, data completeness was difficult due to security and/or political constraints. Data collection is heavily controlled in Yemen; and therefore, authorisation is required for all assessments as well as the right to access field locations. Bureaucratic impediments make the process slow. Issues with nutrition data quality due to a lack of technical capacity were specifically mentioned by several respondents. UNICEF and the Nutrition Cluster are trying to address this gap through capacity development as well as supporting more standardised assessment processes, although in some areas they still struggle to find qualified partners.

#### **Potential solutions:**

Many of the issues discussed above have been addressed in the recommendations above. However, at least one additional recommendation is applicable here:

- a) **Validate data by sector.** There are opportunities for the food security data validation process to be more transparent and participatory. The expected impact of increased transparency and participation include greater ownership of a stronger technical consensus around the analysis.

### **5.5.2. Mortality**

With respect to data gaps, the most pervasive one across the four countries is the lack of mortality data. This is of significant concern, as mortality is one of the three required indicators to be able to declare famine. There is a larger strategic question of the practicality of some of the IPC protocols within fragile and complex contexts. Within a context where there are significant challenges to collecting high-quality data on all three of the indicators required for famine declaration, it is critical to move away from seeing IPC/CH Phase 5 as a “turning point”. A significant amount of excess mortality can occur before this point is reached. Often times, there is no mortality data in order to even be able to declare Phase 5. The complexity of mortality data lies in the fact that it requires larger sample sizes and particularly careful attention to the protocol. It is difficult but possible to embed mortality in a SMART-lite survey.

#### **Potential solutions:**

- a) **Adopt alternative means for mortality calculations.** The updated IPC manual currently being drafted has a methodology for mortality assessment in exceptional circumstances. It includes a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods such as interviews with key informants, grave counting and a review of hospital or health centre records. If no other mortality assessments are possible in key areas (e.g. locations in IPC/CH Phase 4), then an alternative methodology for crude mortality estimation may have to be used.

### **5.5.3. Population and displacement**

Population figures for the four countries are problematic, as is often the case in countries fraught with insecurity and displacement. Accurate population figures are required for establishing statistical sampling frames, as well as generating the final IPC product of the number of people per location in a given phase. These figures are often used for cluster/sector planning purposes.

In **South Sudan**, there is high fluidity of the population due to insecurity. Sampling is based on outdated population figures; however, new population figures are not likely to be available any time soon. It is not uncommon to organise an assessment mission and upon landing, find that the population has moved on to another location. This displacement complicates data collection and leads to questionable sampling frames.

The last official census in **Somalia** took place in 1992; since then, all agencies have been working with estimates based on assumed population growth. These estimates were deemed to be the best available but likely inaccurate given the frequent internal displacement and emigration. In 2012, the UN Country Team tasked the United Nations Population Fund with undertaking a Population Estimation Survey of Somalia (PESS) in order to provide more accurate statistical population information. The PESS has been a multi-year process, with the updated numbers finally released recently. However, FSNAU has stated that they will not use the updated figures; therefore, different UN agencies and hence operational partners will be using different figures, which will cause confusion. The figures purportedly differ by one million people.

Population figures in **Nigeria** seem particularly problematic and were mentioned by several respondents. The CH uses the population figures from the last census, which predates the crisis in northeastern Nigeria. The issue with the old figures is that they are generally known to be incorrect, as several LGAs have been emptied of people and the population of Maiduguri has doubled. This means that when the IPC process outlines the number of people in a particular phase in a given area, the number is often inaccurate and does not coincide with the actual number of people in residence in the LGA. There are more updated population figures available, which are used in immunisation programmes. In Borno State, an error was discovered in the population figure. The revised figure was subsequently used, which substantially reduced the estimated population; hence, there appeared to be a subsequent reduction in the number of people in humanitarian need that seemed to reflect a substantial improvement in humanitarian conditions. Recent efforts have been made to bring together the various sources of population data and to come up with consensus figures to be used by all. These figures have been used in the most recent Humanitarian Appeal Process.

The recent fighting in **Yemen** has led to the internal displacement of around one million people. These movements can be difficult to track, as they tend to be absorbed into communities and there are no significant internally displaced persons camps forming. This pattern of displacement creates significant problems in determining the specific needs of displaced populations.

#### **5.5.4. Qualitative information**

Across the board, IPC/CH processes could be significantly enriched by qualitative data that help to provide understanding of the context, the drivers of the crisis, the patterns of displacement, gender and household dynamics and a host of other topics. Qualitative information could be useful in trying to extrapolate findings in difficult to reach areas, and qualitative interviewing techniques used with new arrivals could help fill in data gaps in inaccessible areas.

Yet, in all countries, IPC/CH processes are dominated by survey data, and for the most part, teams do not really know what to do with qualitative data, how to judge validity and how to incorporate the data into an analysis dominated by survey data. As a result, much information is simply left out (or thrown out) of the analysis. This is a weakness that needs to be addressed.

**Possible solutions:**

- a) **Improve use and interpretation of qualitative data.** There should be more flexibility in the IPC/CH analysis framework to include qualitative information. Qualitative information can help enrich discussions on vulnerabilities, particularly if there is a lack of quantitative information in a given area.
- b) **Provide training and capacity building to TWGs on qualitative analysis.** This would enable teams to be able to judge the quality and reliability of qualitative information and know how to incorporate qualitative information into analyses.

**5.5.5. Gender**

A significant data gap across all of the countries is gender-sensitive analysis of the data. Gender-disaggregated data sets are available for nutrition. However, the IPC/CH analysis process does not consider the significance of these data. In general, this is because significant differences between male and female children are rarely found. Gender-disaggregated data sets are generally not available for food security, although food security assessments do collect information on female-headed households. Food security surveys rely on households as their unit of analysis and no data are collected about equity and gender-oriented indicators of food in security impacts within the household. One study in South Sudan (Ministry of Health, WFP, UNICEF, FAO, 2017) found that “gender features a prominent role in food and nutrition insecurity” (p. 11). Time poverty and poor access to resources amongst women result in widespread food access constraints. Due to their traditional role in societies and households, women are often disproportionately affected by shocks, resulting in increased vulnerabilities.

**Potential solutions:**

- a) **Require gender-disaggregated data sets.** Whilst it is unlikely to be logistically possible to collect gender-disaggregated food security data during large-scale surveys such as EFSNA, it would be possible to conduct smaller surveys or collect qualitative data to inform the analysis of the differential impacts of shocks on women within these households. This evidence could then be used to inform the regular analysis of EFSNA-type data.
- b) **Incorporate more gender analysis into the IPC/CH.** Since, within most contexts, gender plays a significant role in both nutrition and food security, the IPC/CH process should include more analysis on gender. The IPC/CH analysis framework should strive to better narrate the particular vulnerabilities of female/male population subgroups.

**5.6. Funding**

Funding issues affect all stages of the IPC/CH process, from data collection to analysis as well as the use of the analysis to advocate for resource allocation. Due to the poor infrastructure and logistical constraints of operating in **South Sudan**, finding sufficient funds for the large-scale FSNMS twice per year can be difficult. For nutrition data, poor data planning means that duplicate surveys have been done in certain areas (e.g. both UNICEF and the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance have funds to support a SMART survey in a given area). Each SMART survey costs between US\$15,000 and US\$35,000, depending on whether an international consultant or a local consultant is supporting the assessment and the logistics involved in assessing a given area. In South Sudan, approximately 55 SMART surveys are done per year, a significant amount of funding that must be sourced each year. However, many of these are done at times and for reasons that are not related to IPC analysis.

In **Somalia**, FSNAU manages the funding of all food security and nutrition assessments that populate the IPC analysis framework, though there is an expectation of in-kind support from NGOs and UN agencies in the form of staff to act as enumerators and cars for transport. The predominance of FSNAU in the food security and nutrition analysis domain means that there is little funding left for partners wanting to invest in surveys for their own operational purposes (often looking at a smaller area). The exception is for SMART surveys in areas that FSNAU is unable to access. The AIM TWG of the Nutrition Cluster has developed a comprehensive costed survey plan that details both the quantitative and qualitative assessments that the cluster deems necessary. The plan is to use it as a strategic advocacy tool with the donor working group to increase investment in nutrition situational analyses. As in South Sudan, some respondents in Somalia feel there is too much donor focus on the areas in the higher IPC phase classifications and not enough investment in the prevention of humanitarian emergencies.

In **Nigeria**, much of the data collection for the large-scale food security and nutrition assessments is supported by UN agencies, mainly WFP and UNICEF. Whilst FAO used to provide considerable financial support, they occupy more of an advisory role at the moment. As in Somalia, NGOs are expected to provide in-kind support to the food security assessments and to lobby UNICEF for financial support to conduct SMART surveys for nutrition. The available funding for food security assessments is not uniform through the areas included in the IPC analysis due to donors pulling back investment and concentrating on the most affected areas of northeastern Nigeria. In some areas, a full vulnerability assessment is available; in other locations, primarily food production data are available.

Respondents in **Yemen** did not mention any particular funding issues. The key issues in Yemen on the ability to conduct assessments are linked to insecurity and political will. WFP conducts the large-scale EFSNA and UNICEF provides funds for many agencies to conduct SMART surveys. Other NGOs can sometimes access independent funding to do assessments for their operational needs.

## 6. Conclusions and general recommendations

One of this study's objectives was to identify critical short-term gaps in data availability or quality that might be addressed by timely donor action. For the most part, few such recommendations emerged from the analysis. Were better hot spot identification mechanisms in place, for instance, it might be possible to identify potential information gaps that could be addressed by rapid donor action. In the absence of early warning systems or other means of hot spot identification (short of IPC/CH analysis itself), there are few examples in which additional short-term standby funds could help to proactively address data gaps. The causes of data gaps lie elsewhere. The main recommendations of this report are included at the end of each section above; however, a few general conclusions are noted here.

**Clarify the purpose of IPC/CH analysis.** There is a strong need to clarify the overall purpose of IPC/CH analysis and to align data collection/analysis to that overall purpose. If the overall purpose is related to operational decision-making, it makes sense to leave data decision-making and prioritisation to operational needs. If the overall purpose is for a general statement of needs or to inform the Humanitarian Needs Assessment and Humanitarian Response Plan, then it makes sense for the coordination of data collection to move to a different body than the individual operational agencies. Several options are possible for the form this would take, ranging from FSNAU-type bodies, through UN agency–managed systems (already a partial reality for the majority of food security data). If this

cannot be accomplished or is considered to not be a suitable solution, then donors and operational agencies need to agree on the balance of priorities, IPC and operational priorities, suitable for the country context. This will probably require additional funding to conduct the IPC/CH analysis, particularly for technical human resources and in the area of nutrition and mortality data. Any of the three options or a combination of the options would require a strong lead in negotiating compromise and suitable context-specific solutions. Senior UN leaders and donors would probably be best suited to lead this process.

**Build (in-country) technical capacity.** In all four countries, there was a clear message that appropriate technical capacity across all stakeholders remains a significant weakness in ensuring good quality coverage, timely data collection and analysis. Technical capacity building is being addressed at the global and national levels, led by the IPC GSU. However, in most cases, the investments being made by individual technical agencies in capacity building for the IPC/CH remain relatively low. This may reflect their view of the importance of the IPC/CH process to their own operations (hence the link to the first recommendation above). As discussed in the point above, strong leadership is required to clarify the priorities of the humanitarian community for evidence-based decision-making. When this clarity has been achieved, capacity strengthening can then be focused and resourced to achieve these priorities. However, greater attention needs to be devoted to this question.

**Strengthen leadership and management of IPC/CH processes.** In order to organise high-quality evidence collection across sectors at the same time in highly complex environments—and then construct a consensus analysis—technical capacity alone is insufficient. The leaders of key agencies involved in IPC/CH analysis must engage more closely with the process, and must have the required competencies in leadership and management for these highly complex collaborative and technical processes.

**Bolster linkages to early warning.** Greater attention must be given to the key task of hot spot identification. This includes ensuring early identification of problem areas to enable early action; early identification of problems to enable the most efficient allocation of assessment resources; and the use of innovative methodologies (e.g. REACH Area of Origin) or technology (e.g. cell phones) to enhance effectiveness.

In order to achieve this, early warning systems in all countries should be reviewed, with the intent to strengthen this critical component of early warning. In the case of Somalia, it will be important to follow up on precisely why the FSNAU dashboard is not being utilised more—since this is the one clear example in which an early warning mechanism has been set up to identify hot spots.

**Continue investments in data quality and validation processes.** Data quality checks and validation processes have improved, but more remains to be done to ensure the rigour and quality of an analysis. This includes concerns about the “ownership” of the data. Doubts about the quality of data damage trust and confidence and may be undermining the entire process. Data quality tools have been developed for nutrition and mortality. Food security stakeholders need to develop similarly appropriate tools and processes that not only guarantee the quality of the analysis but also strengthen transparency and ownership of the data and the technical consensus process.

**Foster a transparent, collaborative and participatory IPC/CH process.** As discussed above, technical consensus is the foundation of the IPC/CH process. Transparency, participation and collaborative application of technical knowledge are the principles of this technical consensus. The lack of an explicit data-sharing protocol, particularly for food security, that applies these principles and prevarication around the transparency of data sharing and data analysis was mentioned in several

countries to be a significant source of suspicion about the motivations of data collection stakeholders in the process.

**Incorporate additional indicators and collaborating information.** In the medium term, different kinds of data need to be more heavily emphasised in the analysis. IPC analysis is weak on information from other associated sectors, such as WASH and health. Inclusion of qualitative data in IPC/CH analysis, although often available, is a particular weakness that could be addressed by more attention to the tools and capacity development on how to include these elements of the analysis. Information about the drivers of crisis, particularly conflict, is frequently weak.

**Institute safeguards against ‘false negatives’.** Finally, it will be important in the medium term to find a balance in avoiding “errors” with regard to famine classification. Two obvious kinds of errors threaten IPC analysis: false positives (declaring a famine when there actually is not one); and false negatives (failing to declare a famine when there actually is one). Currently, the IPC protocols have very strong protections against the error of false positives. If IPC protocols are used to declare famine, there are few threats that the situation is being overstated: all indicator thresholds must be unambiguously breached in the same population at the same time and this must be demonstrated using data that have passed rigorous reliability checks. Unfortunately, much of the experience of the past five years has made it clear that data of that level of rigour and quality are very difficult to collect in the conflict-affected, highly insecure and often inaccessible areas where contemporary famine occurs. This has often made it extremely difficult to make a definitive statement about famine. New methods for more rapid data collection have been adapted to fit highly insecure and inaccessible areas. These efforts help address this situation, but additional safeguards against the likelihood of false negatives are still needed.

## 7. References

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## Annex 1: Interview Guide

*Interviews with DFID country offices.* These questions will include an overview of the data collection and analysis planning process from the perspective of the donor. Examples of questions include:

1. Could you describe the data planning process?
2. What do you think are the main strengths/weaknesses of the data planning process?
3. Do you have any concerns about the data planning in your countries? (Probe for detailed examples)
4. In the past, have there been good examples of how the data plan (collection, analysis and reporting) has been created and executed? How to gauge “success” /goodness of data plans? What factors facilitated/hindered these successful data plan?
  - a. Have these good examples been systematically incorporated in the present plans?
5. In the past have there been notable gaps in the data plan (collection, analysis and reporting) that have impeded IPC or other analysis?
6. Do you see the same problems appearing in the next analysis? (Ask for ranking of these problems?)
7. Does anyone keep track of gaps in the data/analysis? Who is responsible to take action on identified gaps?
8. Who coordinates the data collection (not to be confused with who coordinates the analysis component)
9. What determines coordinates/controls data availability? (Political actors/constraints etc.)
10. How much funding/what support does DFID office support/fund give to data planning (planning, data collection? Analysis?) Will/has this change/d? What internal and external factors influence funding/support provided?
11. Any concerns/needs on capacity within DFID to support improved data collection and reliability?
12. What are the key areas of improvement/specific recommendations you would like to see come out of this piece of work?
  - a. Probe for a variety of perspectives including methodology, coordination, synthesis and data sharing.
13. Can you provide us with introductions, contacts and recommendations of key people to interview?

*Interviews with IPC GSU, Steering Committee and Country Technical Working Groups.* These questions will explore how data gathering and analysis is planned, who makes decisions, what data is available and who decides? They will also explore funding issues, information gaps resulting, coordination and improvements needed. These respondents are the ones likely to be engaged in the collective analysis of data. Examples of questions include:

1. How is the data plan organised? (planning, collection, analysis, reporting)
2. Who decides what information is collected and how are priorities set?
3. What data are available? What data are often not? Why not?
4. What issues cause gaps in data e.g. funding, security, politics?
5. Who makes the decision on what to compromise due to these issues?
6. How does funding affect the data plan and how is funding for data collection organised?
7. How are decisions about security related decisions about data collection made? (Who makes this call?)
8. Are there chronic gaps in the information available for the analysis?
9. What are they? Who would be supposed to collect that information? Why is it not collected?

10. What gaps in the data seem to be persistent (types of data or geographical?) Why is that? (probe for prospective political reasons)
11. Who are all the agencies involved, and who is responsible for what?
12. Is there any kind of a “Who? What? Where? When?” for data collection.
13. Who supervises data collection protocols quality for each type of analysis and the overall process? Is it every agency policing itself on quality issues?
14. Are there general guidelines on what to do in cases of extreme constraints (access, security, etc.)? What are minimum standards for data collection?
15. How do adaptations to data collection protocols get made? Who authorises, who provides technical assistance?)
16. What would you recommend needs to be improved in the data plan for the next analysis?

*Interviews with relevant agencies (WFP, UNICEF, FAO, ACF, other NGOs, government bodies, etc.):*

Likewise, these question will explore how data gathering and analysis is planned, who makes decisions, what data is available and who decides? They will also explore funding issues, information gaps resulting, coordination and improvements needed. These respondents are the ones likely to be actually collecting data. Examples of questions include:

1. What is the process of data planning?
2. How do you decide what information to collect?
3. How do you organise funding for your areas of data collection responsibility?
4. How do you make decisions about security issues for data collection?
5. Has politics ever influenced what data you collect or where you collect data?
6. What is your organisations role in synchronising the timing, coverage and data collection priorities with other organisations?
7. Are there any examples of data gaps which your organisation might usually be responsible to collect? If yes what are the reasons for these data gaps? What is your policy on minimum standards for data collection in extreme situations?
8. Are there any good examples of how your organisation has solved some of the issues you have described above? How have these good examples been incorporated in your data plans?
9. Who is responsible to check the quality of the data you collect? How is the quality check shared?
10. Is data disaggregated by age and gender?
11. What would you like to recommend to improve the data plan for the next assessments?