

- **Macroeconomic policies** place the focus on medium- and long-term measures that aim to stabilize a given economy (currency devaluations, labour markets, interest rates on borrowing capital, privatization, financial liberalization, public investments, and trade liberalization).
- **Social policies** place the focus on measures that can improve health and nutrition, education, safety nets, and social protection schemes for the disadvantaged.
- **Sectoral policies** place the focus on specific areas within an overall economy and society (e.g. agriculture, water supply, management and sanitation, energy infrastructure, and the environment).

**Institutions and organizations**, the structures through which policies are formulated and implemented, represent the interface between households and policymakers.

- The **state**, in addition to services, may provide safety nets, change policies, or limit freedoms, all of which can have positive or adverse effects on livelihood systems.
- **Formal civil society** may offer support of conditions that enable households; or may confine household opportunities.
- **Informal civil society** may negatively or positively influence the livelihood strategies pursued by households.
- The **private sector** may augment or constrict opportunities for households.

The political, institutional, and economic environment has a profound effect on household livelihoods (assets, strategies, and outcomes). For example, the local agricultural policy governing input and output markets has an effect on whether households whose main activity is farming can effectively use their land, labour, water, and livestock (livelihood assets). Input and output markets facilitate the production, movement, and exchange of agricultural commodities (e.g. seeds, fertilizer, storage, marketing, farm-gate purchases). If such systems are inefficient, then farming-based livelihoods are rendered ineffective, leading to losses in income and contributing to a broader decrease in household welfare. This shows clearly how policies and institutions can affect **availability** of assets, **access** to those assets, and ability to utilize assets productively.

### 1.3 THE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

CFSVA is based on a particular understanding of food security and vulnerability. The Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework informs not only the selection of indicators for analysis and use in geographic targeting, but also the design of field assessment instruments and the organization of standardized reporting formats. The Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework adopted by CFSVAs considers food availability, food access, and food utilization as core elements of food security, and links them to households' asset endowments, livelihood strategies, and political, social, institutional, and economic environment. The strength of the household livelihoods approach lies in its ability to obtain a holistic and multidimensional profile of a micro-level context

- food, nutrition, livelihood, and rights-realization - with strong regional and national contextualization, allowing for the scaling-up of interventions (CARE, 2002).

Food security was broadly defined in the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action with the following text:



Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

While this is a goal-level notion, it is important to define operational measures of food insecurity, vulnerability to food insecurity, and its determinants. The CFSVA focuses on identifying specific metrics for food insecurity and vulnerability and it adopts a risk analysis framework for understanding the distribution and causes of vulnerability and resiliency of countries, regions, communities, and households.

During a CFSVA, this framework serves two purposes by providing:

- a basis for developing initial hypotheses on the level of vulnerability and food insecurity, and the causes and effects of both; and
- a succinct way of visualizing the relationships among factors that affect food and nutrition security, which is helpful during data collection and analysis.

The Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework is based on UNICEF's Nutrition Framework and the (DFID) Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

The analysis of food security begins with an examination of livelihood assets; the agro-ecological, political and institutional context of the area; and the resulting livelihood strategies adopted by the people that may lead to food security. Various hazards and more gradual changes affect the macro context and household-level assets and strategies, and hence household food security.

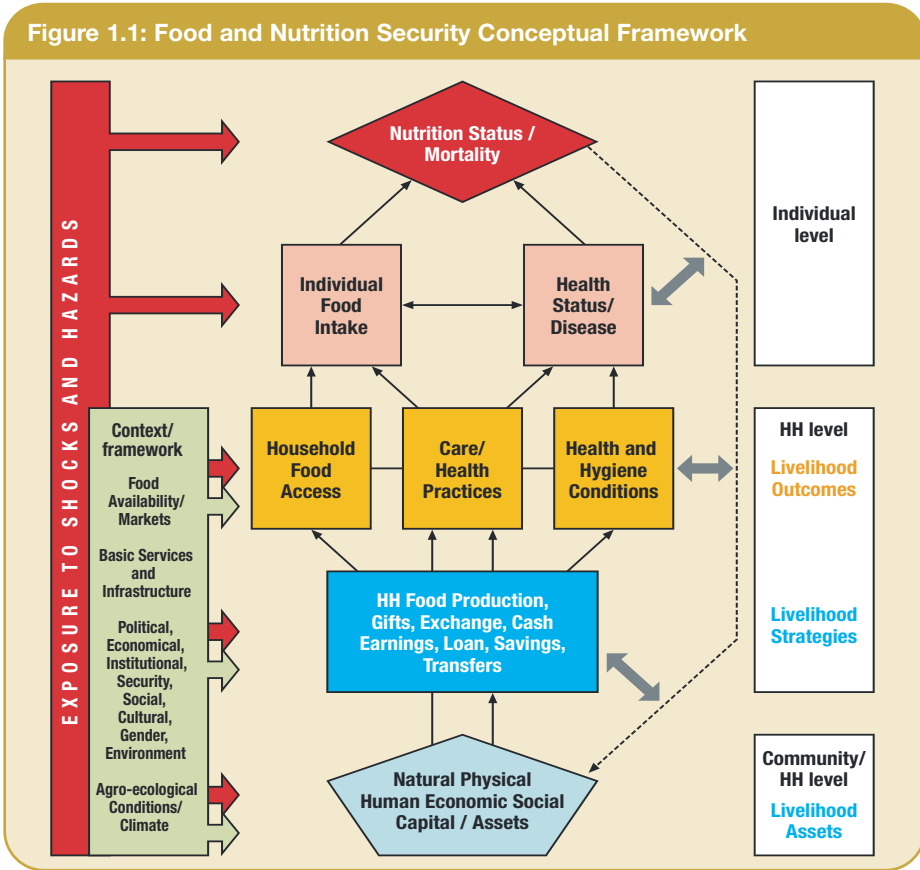
The food security status of any household or individual is typically determined by the interaction among a broad range of agro-environmental, socio-economic, and biological factors. As with the concepts of health or social welfare, there is no single, direct measure of food security. However, the complexity of the food security problem can be simplified by focusing on three distinct, but interrelated, dimensions: aggregate food availability, household food access, and individual food utilization.

Achieving food security requires addressing all three of these separate dimensions, ensuring that:

- the aggregate availability of physical supplies of food from domestic production, commercial imports, food aid, and national stocks is sufficient;
- household livelihoods provide adequate access for all members of the household to those food supplies through home production, market purchases, or transfers from other sources; and
- the utilization of those food supplies is appropriate to meet the specific dietary and health needs of all individuals within a household.

Vulnerability is a forward-looking concept aimed at assessing community and household exposure and sensitivity to future shocks. Ultimately, the vulnerability of a household or community is determined by their ability to cope with their exposure to

Figure 1.1: Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework



the risk posed by shocks such as droughts, floods, crop blight or infestation, economic fluctuations, and conflict. This ability is determined largely by household and community characteristics, most notably a household's or community's asset base and the livelihood and food security strategies it pursues.

The framework shows that exposure to risk is determined by the frequency and severity of natural and man-made hazards, and their socio-economic and geographic scope. The determinants of coping capacity include household levels of natural, physical, economic, human, social, and political assets; levels of household production; levels of income and consumption, and, most important, the ability of households to diversify their income and consumption sources to mitigate the effects of any risks they face.

Coping behaviour involves activities such as the sale of land or other productive assets, the cutting of trees for sale as firewood, and, in an extreme example, the sale of girls into prostitution. These practices undermine not only the long-term productive potential of vulnerable households, but also important social institutions and relationships. The extent of reliance on these destructive practices is an indicator of vulnerability levels during a crisis.

While an understanding of how households cope is important to analysis, knowing how well households cope, or the resilience of household livelihoods, is more important.

How well the local economy can absorb the additional labour or products, such as livestock or firewood, that appear on the market as the result of coping behaviour during a disaster, and the stability of wages and prices for those products, are critical factors in understanding vulnerability.

Food security analysis is primarily a static view of food access and household constraints to that access, from either a short- or long-term perspective. In contrast, risk and vulnerability analysis, because it includes the element of risk that households face in their day-to-day decision-making and their capacity to respond effectively over time, views food access from a more dynamic, forward-looking perspective.

In the end, there is a significant overlap between households that are currently food insecure and those at risk to the severe fluctuations in food access that threaten well-being. While, in concept, all households may be considered vulnerable to a certain degree, from an operational perspective, the primary emphasis of vulnerability analysis should be on households that are nearly, or already food insecure.

CFSVAs should provide stakeholders with an analysis of food insecurity and livelihoods at the sub-national level by addressing the five VAM questions:

#### 1. Who are the food-insecure or vulnerable people?

VAM surveys are conducted at the household level. The collected information is regrouped and analysed in order to create livelihood groups. Looking at household expenditure and income, the analyst is able to determine which are the most vulnerable households and what risks (drought, flood, pest, insecurity) will affect them the most. In Liberia, it was noted that households that had recently returned were particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, as they had to restore their livelihoods in an environment that had been destroyed by the war. These households are now a priority for WFP.

#### 2. How many people are food insecure or vulnerable?

During the design phase of the survey, a sample of households is drawn using probability sampling methods. The prevalence of food insecurity and vulnerability found in the sample is applied to the entire population from which the sample was drawn in order to estimate the total number of food-insecure and vulnerable people. (For example, in Mali, VAM estimated in 2005 that 6.2 million people were food insecure and vulnerable.) These numbers are then used to target WFP PRROs and EMOPs.

#### 3. Where do the food-insecure and vulnerable people live?

CFSVAs provide an essential package of maps showing the areas most affected by food insecurity and vulnerability. These are crucial tools for decision-makers and for targeting aid. The maps are produced by VAM staff with considerable experience in geographical information systems.

#### 4. What are the underlying causes and threats of food security and malnutrition?

CFSVAs collect a wide range of information that allows VAM and WFP to explore the determinants of food insecurity/vulnerability. Using qualitative and quantitative techniques, together with local expert judgment, the CFSVA analysis team is able to identify the local contextual causes of food insecurity and vulnerability.

## 5. What are the implications for food security interventions?

VAM gives recommendations for interventions in a country based on the conclusions of the CFSVA and input from WFP programme officers and partners in development involved in the CFSVA and in the field of food security.

### 1.4 BASIC GENDER CONCEPTS, FRAMEWORKS, AND INDICATORS<sup>5</sup>

#### 1.4.1 Gender analysis and CFSVA studies

The purpose of gender analysis is to determine gender disparity. This knowledge can then be incorporated into gender-responsive programming with positive measures taken to level the playing field. The effective integration of gender analysis into CFSVA studies entails exploring how gender roles relate to all aspects of food security (availability, access, and utilization) and food aid interventions. Specific issues include:

- Understanding how gendered division of labour and decision-making power are related to food availability and access;
- Exploring variability of food consumption (i.e. utilization), health, and nutrition by gender and how these factors affect food utilization for both genders;
- Analysing how the benefits of food aid interventions can be effectively targeted to both men and women and used to promote gender equality; and
- Anticipating any negative impacts interventions may have on women or men, girls or boys, or on gender relationships.

Applying a gender perspective to CFSVA studies demands that a gender-sensitive approach be taken during research design, data collection, data analysis, reporting, and, ultimately, programme planning. This requires an explicit sensitivity to the varying needs of men and women. It is therefore crucial to involve men and women in all stages of the research, and to sensitize enumerators and other research team members to gender issues relevant to the context in which a study is being conducted.

#### Avoiding assumptions

Although the term gender has often been misinterpreted as focusing on women, a gender perspective requires a comparative analysis of men and women, as well as the relations between them.

Assumptions concerning the relationship between gender and vulnerable groups are inappropriate prior to the analysis of the particular context under study, and run the risk of introducing bias into the research design.



#### 1.4.2 Gender analysis frameworks

Gender relates to all three aspects of food security:

- **food availability** - productive, reproductive and community roles;
- **food access** - differentiated access to and control over resources, power, and decision-making at the household and community level; and
- **food utilization** - caring practices, reproductive health, gender-specific diseases.

5. Information in this section draws heavily on the *Thematic Guidelines: Integrating a Gender Perspective into Vulnerability Analysis*, WFP, 2005.