

# Long-term food security: investing in people and livelihoods



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## Where do we come from?

Sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve a single Millennium Development Goal. It is the only region in the world where malnutrition, a product of food insecurity, is on the rise. Food insecurity in Africa has many complex causes, including HIV/AIDS, climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, a huge increase in population size, and debt.

These factors have had a profound impact on traditional livelihoods, making them unsustainable and, for many people in constant crisis, restricting their ability to access sufficient food. Coping strategies used in response to crisis further contribute to the erosion of livelihoods. The International Federation is focusing its support on food security in Africa in response to such particularly high-level needs in the continent.

The International Federation has been responding to food insecurity in Africa since the major famines of the mid-1980s, but first made long-term food security a strategic priority at the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan African Conference in Ouagadougou in September 2000. The agreement that came out of the conference, known as the Ouagadougou Declaration, states that:

*“Making food security a strategic priority for this decade, recognizing that food insecurity is directly linked to a number of root causes, including poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the worsening debt crisis and armed conflict.”*

The 6<sup>th</sup> Pan African conference in Algiers 2004 reaffirmed this strategy with a renewed commitment to pursue food security with vigour and focus.

Since 2000, a large number of African National Societies have been actively engaged in initiatives to reduce food insecurity. Around half of the sub-Saharan African National Societies have so far implemented food security programmes, designed to improve the *availability*, *access* and *utilization* of food in communities. The International Federation regards these three components as interrelated and essential for achieving food security.

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life”.

World Food Summit 1996

The International Federation also recognizes that food security is an outcome of livelihoods, in other words the capabilities, assets, and activities needed to sustain a means of living, including ways to obtain food. We therefore believe it is essential to support and protect livelihoods as well as help the vulnerable meet their immediate basic needs for food in order to reduce food insecurity in Africa.

## What do we aim to achieve?

Our purpose is to scale up our efforts in assisting national food security programmes so that at least 20 per cent of the most vulnerable populations are provided with longer-term food security support by the Red Cross Red Crescent and that their resilience is enhanced. We aim to achieve this through three *programmatic objectives*:

- improving and scaling up community-based food security programming in 15 African National Societies;
- increasing long-term food security technical capacity at the International Federation, in particular at African National Societies;



- strengthening understanding of long-term food security programming, including integration and coordination.

These objectives will be bolstered by a *fourth enabling objective*:

- strengthening community and National Red Cross Red Crescent Society organizational and structural capacities.

In 2003, the International Federation developed a global “Food security and nutrition” policy to define the scope of food security within National Societies. This policy has since provided guidance and direction in our food security interventions.

Although we will continue to ensure support to address the immediate needs of those in food crisis, we will also work to reduce vulnerability to such disasters in Africa through longer-term support to livelihoods and food security. Strengthening livelihoods in order to improve food security and resilience to disasters is also at the heart

of our work in disaster risk reduction in Africa. This initiative in food security therefore ties in with the Red Cross Red Crescent Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction.

We will further strengthen and closely integrate Red Cross Red Crescent work in long-term food security – with our work in the areas of community-based healthcare, and water and sanitation. Our work in longer-term food security support will also link into our existing HIV work in communities made vulnerable to the effects of AIDS in Africa. This is because AIDS profoundly impacts on communities’ ability to sustain livelihoods, cope with shocks and, therefore, to obtain sufficient food.

## What will we do?

We will implement a five-year strategic framework, which builds on earlier initiatives, to enhance capacities on food security programming within the International Federation. The detailed planning and implementation of programmes will develop as knowledge and capacities at all levels increase. Examples of food security programme interventions by the Red Cross Red Crescent include sustainable farming, small-scale irrigation schemes, microfinance projects, animal husbandry, nutrition, and the establishment of community-based food security monitoring systems.

This five-year strategic framework will initially focus on 15 African National Societies implementing food security.

## How do we work?

The International Federation is the world’s largest voluntary network, with millions of members and volunteers worldwide, living in communities in every corner of the globe, including Africa. This makes us very well placed to have access to, and work in partnership with, the most vulnerable communities whilst also having access to policy-makers.

Securing food in the community is complex. Food security support needs to be interlinked with other sectors, including health and care, HIV and our response to disasters. Our work to reduce food insecurity will, therefore, be integrated with other sectors, particularly HIV and disaster risk reduction, in order to maximize its impact.

We will strengthen our community-based food security monitoring system in order to better understand and complement early warning indicators provided by



national, regional and global early warning systems. We will develop long-term programmes to effectively and sustainably address longer-term needs in livelihoods and food security.

Interventions will be evidence-based and will be driven by good practice developed both internally within the Red Cross Red Crescent and externally. Programmes will be developed with the full consultation and participation of vulnerable communities in order to ensure that programmes build on existing assets, capabilities and priorities of the communities and that they are owned by them.

Interventions will seek out the most vulnerable and build resilience and, in line with the fundamental principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent, they must prioritize reaching and empowering the people that are most in need.

## Next steps

This strategy demonstrates the International Federation's commitment to scale up its efforts in long-term food security in Africa.

As a first step, we will conduct in-depth country-level analysis and planning with all 15 targeted African National Societies. This will include the participation of all Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies supporting food security in Africa. This phase, which will be conducted between November 2007 and May 2008, will be followed by the design of concrete programme proposals, action plans and budgets, to be completed by July 2008. Finally, programme implementation, at community level, will start in October 2008.



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