



# AFRICARE FOOD SECURITY REVIEW



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## **Guidance: How to Measure the Number of Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) Based on Participatory Rural Appraisals in Food Security Interventions**

**Africare<sup>ii</sup>**

### **Introduction**

Africare uses its measure Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) to assess the extent of food insecurity in project areas, to develop and initiate intervention strategies, to target vulnerable households, and to assess and track progress made in improving food security throughout the life spans of food security interventions (FSI). Two methods are used to measure MAHFP. One uses quantitative data from a sample of households to calculate an average MAHFP (hereafter referred to as MAHFP average). The second uses Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) sessions with community food security committees to qualitatively reach an agreement about the percentages of households in different categories of food security based on the group's perception of MAHFP (hereafter referred to as MAHFP-PRA).<sup>iii</sup> This guidance has been developed as a practical tool for field agents of Africare and other cooperating sponsors (CS) for measuring and using MAHFP based on PRA techniques (i.e., MAHFP-PRA).

One important goal of Africare's Title II-funded Institutional Capacity Building grant (FY04-08) was to capitalize on Africare's extensive experience with using the MAHFP to guide program design, routine monitoring, and impact assessments. Since the start of fiscal year 2007 (FY07), FANTA now requires that all new Title II programs that intend to improve household food access include the MAHFP (and the Household Dietary Diversity Score [HDDS]) in all of the Indicator Performance Tracking Tables (IPTT) (Bilinsky and Swindale 2007: 1).

Below, background information is presented that explains the evolution of the use of this tool, the methods section details how to conduct the community meetings and arrive at an MAHFP-PRA figure for the community in five steps. This guidance then discusses how to use the PRA food security calendar in developing a food security action plan and autonomous use by communities of MAHFP based on census data. The final three sections provide information on the use of MAHFP-PRA for tracking risk management strategies of vulnerable groups, stratifying MAHFP by relevant characteristics, and other potential uses of MAHFP. Annex A is the proposed PRA tool for analyzing risk and shock management strategies.

### **Background**

Africare developed the MAHFP tool under its USAID-funded Institutional Support Assistance (ISA) grant (FY99-FY03). It has been used to assess project impact on food access and on vulnerability and has

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become one of Africare's core indicators. All Africare programs have incorporated MAHFP into their tracking systems; however the method used in arriving at the figures for MAHFP have varied both between programs and within programs. Some programs reported a quantitative figure based on a sample of household interviews (usually incorporated into the baseline and final surveys) in which the average MAHFP was calculated from the MAHFP for each household (MAHFP-average). Some programs reported a qualitative figure based on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) sessions with a group of community members in which they gave their perception of the percentage of households that were in different food security levels based on how much food they had through the year (MAHFP-PRA). Some programs reported both of these types of MAHFP figures and, at times, it has been difficult to distinguish which of these methods was used for MAHFP figures. One of the major conclusions of the Africare risk studies in Uganda and Guinea (McMillan et al. 2006 [a], McMillan et al. 2006 [b], respectively) was that both figures should be calculated and reported and that there needs to be a system established to clearly identify the source and methods for the two ways of measuring MAHFP. At the 2007 Africare food security workshop in Niger, field staff from all Africare country programs collaborated to develop the outline for this revised MAHFP-PRA guidance. At the workshop it was decided that both figures were important. MAHFP-PRA should serve as a check or verification of the MAHFP average (based on a quantitative survey, as currently recommended by the FANTA project) and MAHFP-PRA should also be incorporated into the now required risk analysis (see section below on "Use of MAHFP to Track Risk Management of Vulnerable Groups"). This guidance recommends that a common language be adopted throughout Africare programs and beyond that consistently refers to the two measures as MAHFP-PRA and MAHFP-average.

### **How to Determine MAHFP-PRA**

The MAHFP-PRA indicator is best measured using the following steps. Step 1 is consultation with village leadership to familiarize them with the process and importance of measuring MAHFP. Step 2 addresses preparing for the session (community meeting) during which the village food security calendar (FSC) will be developed. Step 3 outlines the important elements in conducting the food security calendar development session. Step 4 describes the way the food security calendar can be used to obtain more information about specific diets for the community in general and for individual households. Step 5 explains how to calculate MAHFP-PRA using the food security calendar.

#### *Step 1: Consultation with Village Leadership*

It is important to first meet with village leadership and explain the purpose of measuring the number of Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) and of preparing a food security calendar and how this feeds into the MAHFP-PRA figures that will result from the community session described below. The leaders need to understand that the MAHFP-PRA is the first piece of information that will be used to plan the steps the local community and the program need to take together to improve the food security situation in the area. The same exercise is critical to the identification of special needs and concerns of households in the most food insecure groups. This exercise is also useful for integrating activities into the community action plans that can improve living standards of these groups. The leaders should understand that participants in the exercise should represent a cross-section of different income and social groups in the community, including gender.

#### *Step 2: Preparation for the PRA Food Security Calendar Development Session*

The PRA food security calendar (FSC) development session should take place in a large flat area (under shade, if possible) on ground that can be used to prepare a diagram. The community members should assemble a pile of stones to represent all the households in the village. The facilitators should bring objects to represent the food situation in the various months. It is best to use symbols that are associated with food. It is not necessary to have a symbol for all the different types of food grown in the area. For example, sorghum stalks can be used to represent months of scarcity. The facilitators should also bring some large sheets of paper and marking pens to use in preparing copies of the completed diagram. One copy will be for the community and a second copy will go back to the program office.

*Step 3: Conducting the PRA Food Security Calendar Development Session*

The facilitator should begin by greeting and thanking community members for coming to provide information to the program. The facilitator should then ask participants to name a recent year that could be considered an “average” or “typical” year. It is also a good idea to collect information on what the situation is like in a “bad” year and an “exceptionally good” year. Alternatively, the facilitator might want to first ask the group to describe the food security situation for the current/recent year and then have them determine if the recent situation is typical, good, or bad. The discussion would then lead on to the community members describing a more distant year that is different (in terms of typical, good, or bad) from the present or recent year described first. If this alternative approach is used it may maximize the accuracy of the description of the type of year that is the most recent year since that is the one most fresh in their memories. The information on the differences between typical, good, and bad years can be used in assessing changes between the beginning of the program, mid-term, and final years since it is useful to know the type of years the data represent and how the same types of years have fared in the past (before the project intervened).<sup>iv</sup>

Having established the year that will represent the typical or average food security situation, the next discussion is about different “food security levels” in the community and the relative size of the groups in the village that fit in these different levels. Using a pile of stones to represent all the households in the village, ask the community participants to divide the stones into piles representing households that were least food insecure, average, and most food insecure during the year in question. The participants often divide the stones into three groups, but sometimes they may divide their community into a larger number of groups. For example, in a land-scarce area, the participants may divide the least food secure group into two subgroups: those households with enough land for their house and a compound garden and those with only enough land for their house. The size of the piles will provide a perspective on the percentages of people in the community with different levels of food security and vulnerability. For the moment, it is enough to discuss the levels of food insecurity and the composition of food security groups in the local community. The exercise that follows will establish the severity of the food insecurity.

After establishing the food security categories, the details will be filled in about each of the different food security groups and the situation for specific months during the year. The facilitator should draw a diagram representing the months of the year on the ground. Begin with the group that is considered average. Ask community members first about the months in which those average households “eat until they are satisfied.” For each of the months that community members believe that households in the average food security group “eat until they are satisfied,” the facilitator or the community members will place a marker (e.g., a corn [maize] cob). Next, the facilitator should ask about the months that these average families in a typical year (or the reference year) suffer from hunger. Ask them to put a different marker (e.g., sorghum stalk) under these months. The months that are left will be considered transition months and can be filled with yet different marker (e.g., a leaf). Once the experience of the average group of households for that particular type of year (good, bad, or typical) has been recorded by the facilitator onto the paper, move to either the group that is better off or the one that is worse off and ask the same questions, recording the information using the same markers representing “eating to satisfaction,” “hunger,” and “transitional” as with the first group (in this example, a corn/maize cob, sorghum stalk, and leaf, respectively). Finally, complete the exercise with the third group (and others if there are more than three groups), thus filling in the entire matrix that is the food security calendar for that community. The table below is an example of a food security calendar. Please note, the percentage of the population in each category is not an ideal for which to aim, but rather an illustration of what may be found. There will be considerable variation between countries and between different locations within a country or even within a single project intervention area.

*Step 4: Using the Food Security Calendar to Gather Additional Information on Diets*

After completing the calendar, it is now useful to go back and discuss the diagram and then the categories established in the calendar with the local community. This will provide a matrix of information about the consumption patterns of different groups in the community at different times of the year. It will also establish the potential for improving the situation, such as by identifying foods that are available, but not currently eaten. For example, begin by asking about the period of abundance when families eat until they

are satisfied (see Figure 2). Ask about each group in turn (least food insecure, average, most food insecure) finding out about how many times a day they (adults and children) eat, what their diet is like during that period, what types of food management strategies they might use to cope with scarcity. The facilitator will most likely find that the average and especially the most food insecure groups are likely eating less for the period in which they are eating until they have satisfied their hunger than does the least food insecure group (illustrating the relative nature of “eating until satisfied”). Other topics of discussion using the calendar as a point of departure will include strategies people use to avoid hunger or to deal with its consequences once they find themselves in a hungry period. Continue the exercise with the transition and hungry periods.

The same type of food security calendar can be conducted with individual households, going into considerably greater depth. The purpose of this exercise is both to gather additional information at the household level and to check the information that comes out of the group activity. It is useful to draw this calendar with households of different food security levels, such as a highly food secure family, a family with average food security and, perhaps, one or two families from the most food insecure categories. The detailed food security calendar that can be done at the household level can list the different foods that the family eats during different times of the year and the project staff member conducting the interview can make note of whether the foods were grown, purchased, or obtained from another source (such as gifts or food aid). This figure should take into account household access to food (food from all sources—food purchases, food assistance, and production). Since the long-term goal of the project is to reduce vulnerability and dependence on external assistance, it is important to gather accurate village-level data on how much food aid from different sources is coming in and being used by different categories of food insecure people. Project staff should carry out this type of activity with several representative families during the baseline and then repeat this exercise at the mid-term and final evaluations.<sup>v</sup> The exercise will be useful in targeting the most vulnerable groups and examining the project’s impact on the number of months of food insecurity in each group, as well as their coping strategies. This information is critical to the assessment of the project’s impact on the management of routine food insecurity risks and shocks.

*Step 5: Using the Food Security Calendar to Calculate the Number of Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning*

When the food security calendar is complete, it can be used to calculate the MAHFP for each category of food insecurity (I Least Food Insecure, II Moderately Food Insecure, and III Most Food Insecure)<sup>vi</sup> identified in the food security calendar development PRA exercise. This information is critical to:

- Facilitating integration of special activities for the most vulnerable people into the community action plans and project activities and
- Tracking the project’s impact on the most food insecure groups (Category III).

To facilitate better targeting and tracking, it is advisable to conduct a PRA food security calendar session and calculate the “% of households in the most food insecure category” annually (based on this calendar [MAHFP-PRA]) and to report this figure as a monitoring indicator in the project IPTT (if it is in the tracking table every year) or as an impact indicator (if it is only calculated during baseline, mid-term, and final assessments or surveys. If this information is used to calculate the “% of households in the most vulnerable food security category” (as a monitoring or impact indicator) a footnote should specify that the food security calendar PRA exercise is the source of the data in the IPTT, not the quantitative figure used to calculate the average MAHFP Impact Indicator.

In the past, many Africare projects used the PRA food security calendar as a basis for the average Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) Impact Indicator. Given the need to standardize data collection on this indicator between projects and



*Community discussing and developing a food security calendar with GFSI field agent in Kneye village, Mali. Photo Credit: Goumar Aboubacrine*

FANTA's recommendation that the data be based on quantitative surveys, Africare recommends that the information reported in the tracking table for the average MAHFP be based on a quantitative survey. If projects had already started using the food security calendar to report this in the past, they should add a footnote to the official Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT) to explain this. Whenever possible, quantitative surveys should try to also calculate the “% of households in the most food insecure category” and compare the results of the quantitative survey with the results of the food security calendar exercises in the project zone if these have already been conducted (e.g., during a mid-term or final survey).

Only the months when households have sufficient food to eat until they satisfy their hunger should be considered months of adequate food provisioning. The percentage of each category of households in the community and the number of months when each category has adequate provisions will thus be established. Say, for example, that the least food insecure category (10% of the population according to the PRA exercise) has adequate provisions for 10 months out of the year, while the moderately food insecure category (45%) has adequate provisions for six months and the most food insecure category (45%) has adequate provisions for three months out of the year (Figure 1). The MAHFP-PRA for the community would then be  $((.10 \times 10) + (.45 \times 6) + (.45 \times 3))$  or 5.05 months.

At the conclusion of the program the MAHFP-PRA can be calculated again and compared to the initial MAHFP-PRA. It is important to remember that the initial PRA exercise is based on either a “bad,” “average,” or “exceptional,” year and, therefore, this must be considered when comparing the final year (or any other year) to the initial MAHFP-PRA. The following is an example of hypothetical data for a final year MAHFP-PRA exercise. The percentage of the population perceived as being in the least food insecure category has increased to 15 percent with a perceived adequate provisioning for 12 months out of the year; the intermediate category is now perceived as representing 55 percent of households for which there are adequate provisioning for eight months of the year; and the most food insecure category is thought to include 30 percent of households who have adequate provisioning for five months of the year. The MAHFP-PRA for the community would now be  $((.15 \times 12) + (.55 \times 8) + (.30 \times 5))$  or 7.7 months. The overall situation will thus have improved by 2.65 months per year. If this is the same type of year (good, bad, or typical) as the year during which the initial MAHFP-PRA was conducted the comparison is straight-forward. However, if the initial year was classified by community members as being a good year and the final year was classified as being a poor year the improvement of 2.65 months is even better progress. Alternatively, if the initial year was classified as poor and the final year was classified as good then this improvement of 2.65 does not mean as much progress was made. While this cannot be quantified, it is important to note when reporting these figures.

The example given is a typical one for a food security program. An exceptional project might record an improvement of five months, while a poor result could be a change of only one month or none at all. It is important to establish the situation in a bad, typical, and good year at the beginning of the program and to keep track of rainfall<sup>vii</sup> and other conditions (locust infestation, etc.) through the course of the program. This will permit analysis of the results and provide a means of avoiding the criticism that the improvements recorded are due to it being a better year at mid-term and final than that recorded at baseline.

### **Using the Calendar for Preparation of a Food Security Action Plan**

When the calendar is complete, typically it paints a picture of severe food insecurity since this condition is precisely the reason Africare is intervening in the area in the first place. This picture naturally brings up the question, “What can be done to improve the situation?” A preliminary discussion can take place concerning the times of the year and the groups that will need to be involved in any intervention. At this point it is important to introduce a discussion about risks and vulnerability with the community members who participated in the PRA exercise. There may already be resources available to resolve some of the problems. For example, there may be foods available during times of shortage that are not currently eaten. Alternatively, there may be crops that could be grown for harvest during these “lean” or “hungry” periods. The first solution (increasing consumption of already available foods) can be implemented through collection of locally available plants. The second solution (growing new crops) is likely to require both training and new resources to implement.

<b>Category of Food Security</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>
I. Least Food Insecure (10% of population)	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	T	T
II. Moderately Food Insecure (35% of population)	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	T	T	□	□	□	□
III. Most Food Insecure (55% of the population)	θ	θ	θ	θ	T	T	T	T	□	□□	□□	□

- θ Period of Abundance: We eat until we have satisfied our hunger
- T Period of Transition (the ration is reduced)
- Hungry Period (Two squares indicates period of exceptional difficulty)

**Figure 1. Example of a Food Security Calendar**

**Typical Composition of Meals by Food Security Status and Season**

Food Security Category	Period of Abundance	Period of Transition	Hungry Period
I: Least Food Insecure	Eat porridge every morning plus 2 meals. Sorghum or millet paste with complementary sauces, meat, or fish most days, often consumes local beer.	Eat 2 meals, but no longer consume porridge and reduce consumption of meat and fish; ration may be slightly reduced in last months before harvest.	N/A
II: Moderately Food Insecure	Eat porridge (millet flour with tamarind fruit) during morning in cold months plus 2 meals based on sorghum or millet paste with bean or hibiscus leaves.	Adult consumption reduced to 1 meal per day; ration diminishes. Usually no beans. Children continue to eat at least twice a day.	One meal a day and ration is reduced considerably further (to about 1/4 what consumed during abundant period). Wild leaves may be used for sauce if nothing else available.
III: Most Food Insecure	No porridge; 2 sorghum and millet paste based meals a day; quantities and preparation similar to group II.	Ration diminishes to appx. 1/2 what it was during period of abundance, meals reduced to 1/day for adults; children continue to eat at least twice	May go for several days with no significant cereal consumption. Often eat only thin soup of sorghum or millet flour with wild leaves.

**Figure 2. Example of an Interview Matrix to Accompany Food Security Calendar**

Another source of information that is often available is the Hearth program that rehabilitates malnourished children. These programs are based on observations of the diets of children from poor households who are well nourished. In these cases, their mothers are often using foods not provided by others or combining foods in unusual ways. This information can provide ideas on how the diets of other households can be improved.

It will be important to identify solutions that will not upset community leaders, as they could hinder community and/or project efforts to implement food security activities. For example, when the food insecure are working on the fields of the most secure at the optimum time for planting, it will be counter-productive to give the poor supplemental food (through Food for Work, for example) so they can plant their own fields on time. A better solution is to establish cooperatives of the food insecure and equip them with animal traction so they can more efficiently plow for the food secure and work their own fields during the optimum time for planting. To facilitate the planning process, the interventions can be broken down into the various steps that will be required. For example, steps might address how the cooperatives could be organized and how a credit system could be set up for the equipment. Each of these issues will require additional information and discussion. This type of iterative process to develop a food security action plan may take considerable time.

Setting Priorities

When various solutions are identified they can be grouped in order of priority. Those that will be most simple to implement can be identified at this time. In addition, the question of resource availability must be addressed. Some activities can be carried out with resources already available to the community. There may be resources available from either the food security program or from other donors with which the community already has partnerships. The most difficult to implement are those interventions for which donors will have to be identified and proposals prepared. This prioritization exercise will result in a plan for immediate actions to be taken and ideas for longer-term ventures. It will also help to determine what sort of organization will be required to carry out the plan.

### **Autonomous Use of MAHFP by the Community**

The community can learn how to do the exercise without facilitation by program staff. At this point the program staff must decide how to train key community members in conducting food security calendar sessions and in calculating MAHFP-PRA. Recent research by Africare in Uganda showed many factors that contributed to the successful ownership of the MAHFP by the local communities (Box 1). The following factors were especially important (McMillan et al. 2006 [a]: 64-65).

- The tool is very simple, which facilitates the beneficiaries' comprehension of the tool and how to use it.
- There was a direct link between the tool and the identification of strategies to address food security challenges in the food security matrix through concrete actions (e.g., encouraging new households to join the group, formulating by-laws to curb alcoholism, addressing gender issues in the household, and ensuring that group members attend group-sponsored trainings).
- The tool was executed in a highly participatory manner.
- The guidance and the tool were consistent and didn't change much over the project life cycle.
- The project invested extensively in training beneficiaries, local government representatives, and staff.

#### **Box 1. Evidence of Autonomous Use of MAHFP in One Village in Uganda.**

Two days after the project, the Food Security Committee (FSC) continues to keep records of the food security calendar exercise and its dates in their notebook and official archive. The chief difference was that the date of the exercise has been moved from September to January in order to coincide with the first rainy season rather than the Africare reporting cycle. The farmers' confidence in shifting the date is in and of itself an important sign of local ownership.

When the growth promoter in one village where Africare was no longer active was asked to discuss and classify the women that were participating in her program, she was able to quickly categorize them into groups and to link this categorization (based on the MAHFP) to particular health behaviors. Specifically, she observed that:

- Women from the most food insecure categories participated more actively in growth monitoring than those who were more food secure, because they felt "at risk" and
- Women in the most food insecure category tended to stop exclusive breastfeeding more quickly than others due to insufficient food.

Source: McMillan, Della E.; Florence Tushemerirwe; Enoch Musinguzi; Josph Mudiope; Julius Tayebwa, Henry Ahimbisibwe; Nora Twenda; and Michaela Jacova. 2006. Comparative Research/Analysis- Strengthened Village Level Risk Management and Capacity to Reduce Food Insecurity of Affected Populations within Africare's Title II Food Security Programs. Case Study: Uganda Food Security Initiative Project. Washington DC: Africare.

### **Use of the Number of MAHFP to Track Risk Management of Vulnerable Groups**

The new strategy for USAID FFP emphasizes the need to address risk and vulnerability in all food security program initiatives.<sup>viii</sup> In the Uganda risk management study three implications of this new strategy were elaborated (McMillan et al. 2006 [a], pp 12): 1) the need for "...expanding basic food security problem analysis... so that it considers risk and different levels of household vulnerability," 2) "...reorienting projects so vulnerability of food insecure households...is addressed more directly," and 3) paying greater attention to assessing how projects "strengthen livelihood systems and coping strategies of the most vulnerable groups." From the risk study came the recommendation for including an additional variable that would track the percentage of households in the most food insecure category (based on MAHFP), who get lost in the MAHFP-average figure. As discussed above there are two ways to calculate MAHFP and the percentage of households in the third (most food insecure) category can be calculated either through the average or through the MAHFP-PRA exercise. Since many programs only do a quantitative survey at baseline and final, MAHFP-PRA becomes the most useful tool for tracking vulnerable households throughout the life of the project. It is necessary to track vulnerable households annually due to their thin margin for spiraling into disaster. If households are not monitored on a frequent basis, they can end up in more dire straits and then dissolve before project staff know their situation is worsening. Furthermore, due to the fact that Africare's new emphasis on risk means developing specific interventions that target

vulnerable households, it is useful to get immediate feedback on whether these strategies are working (which will be provided with annual MAHFP-PRA information).

The food security calendars must be updated annually along with community work plans. This exercise should include an update of the food security calendar and the percentage of households in each category based on an annual PRA exercise, as well as a discussion with each group about the coping strategies being used to deal with foreseeable risks. Below is a simple PRA form that can be used to track risk strategies of the households in the different categories of food security (Annex A).

Given the special constraints of households in the most food insecure categories, the activities needed to improve their situation are often different from those needed by households in the more food secure categories. Households affected by HIV/AIDS, one of the vulnerable groups in many Africare projects, will also require special consideration. These actions should be clearly identified as part of the broader action plan, but not at the expense of actions for the whole group.

### **Stratifying MAHFP by Relevant Characteristics that are Likely to Affect Food Access**

While it is useful for projects to have a single average number that represents overall change in household food security, it is also important to have measures that take into consideration the specific characteristics that affect household food security. When MAHFP data are stratified by characteristics that affect household food security, changes for one particular sub-group of households will effectively show how program initiatives are succeeding or failing or how the respective characteristics for that group have changed (and will provide projects with the opportunity to quickly adjust their strategy based on this information). For example, MAHFP-PRA (and MAHFP-average based on a quantitative survey) stratified by food aid will immediately identify if a sudden improvement in MAHFP (i.e., decrease in the percentage of households in the most food insecure category) is due to a sudden shipment and distribution of food aid to those households (projects should also track food aid shipments and sources of food within communities). Given this, it is recommended that the PRA discussion address these and other relevant characteristics and the households or areas for which they are relevant. While these characteristics will vary based on project area and community context, some of the expected relevant characteristics may include rainfall, food aid, soil type, food market access, and labor market.

### **Other Potential Uses of the Number of MAHFP**

Until recently, Africare's use of MAHFP has focused on the calculation of a global MAHFP for a project intervention area and the "% of households in the least food secure category." However, as a result of the findings of the risk studies in Uganda and Guinea, several Africare projects have begun to apply MAHFP in new ways. For example, one promising way of adapting MAHFP to "real time" reporting of emerging food crises was pilot tested by Chad in order to be able to adapt food security

#### **Box 2. Use of the Food Security Calendar as a PRA tool for "Real Time" Reporting of Emerging Food Crises in One Village in Chad Program.**

The Chad program has established that households are food secure when they are eating three meals a day, moderately food secure when they are eating two meals a day, and least food secure when they have reduced consumption to one meal a day. The food security committee has been trained to conduct a monthly census to establish which households are eating three meals, how many households are eating two meals, and how many are eating one meal per day. This is an easy exercise to conduct. It also gives timely information on how the food situation is evolving as the year progresses. The information is also more accurate as it is based on a census rather than a community group's perspective of village households in general. With this information, the food security committee can put in place activities to mitigate the situation. For example, the main harvest in the area where Africare operates in Chad is in September/October. Those households that are already reducing consumption in February can be assisted to plant onions. These are harvested in June and can be sold to traders for cash to purchase grain to tide the household over the period up to the next harvest.

Source: Africare 2005.

interventions quickly and effectively target those households whose food security situation was changing/worsening (Box 2). Other projects have used a modified version of the MAHFP to track the participation of vulnerable groups in and benefits from health and nutrition interventions in Burkina Faso (Nanéma et al. 2008) and in emergency relief programs in Guinea (Sidibé et al. 2007). Nanama and Souli (2007) used data from the Zondoma Food Security Initiative (ZFSI Phase II) in Burkina Faso to compare MAHFP to a method for identifying household food insecurity through a questionnaire adapted by FANTA and Cornell University. Furthermore, Bryson and Cohen (In press) compare MAHFP and FSCCI with several other standard measures of impact for food security interventions.

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## Annex A. Proposed PRA Tool for Analyzing Risk and Shock Management Strategies as Part of Annual Update of Food Security Plan

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Food Security Category	Risks	Shocks	Relevant Characteristics Impacting Food Security	Recommendations for Strengthening Risk Management
I: Least Food Insecure				
II: Moderately Food Insecure				
III: Most Food Insecure				

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### ***Africare Food Security Review***

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<sup>i</sup> Based on previous version of MAHFP guidance (Africare 2005).

<sup>ii</sup> This revision of the Africare MAHFP guidance was conducted by a sub-task force of the Africare food security monitoring and evaluation (M&E) working group during a USAID/FFP Title II funded workshop in Niamey, September 3-12, 2007. The members of that group included: Veronica Elisabeth Smith (Africare/Sierra Leone); Conte Mamadou (Africare/Guinea); Issa Konda (Africare/Chad); Veronica Elisabeth Smith (Africare/Sierra Leone); Anthony Atsaye Ngosi (Africare/Uganda); Hamidou Idressa (Africare/Niger); Della E. McMillan (Consultant, Africare/USA); and Ronaldo Sigauque (Africare/Mozambique). The Africare food security M&E working group is co-chaired by Bonaventure Traoré (Africare/Senegal) and Della E. McMillan (Consultant Africare/USA). This is the team overseeing the final revisions as well as monitoring staff feedback on the tool. The current guidance is the fourth major revision of Africare's MAHFP guidance since 1999. The original version of the guidance was developed by **Susan Gervais** and **Karen Schoonmaker-Freudenberger** and produced as part of the Africare Manual on the Design, Execution, and Evaluation of Food Security Activities. A revised version of the guidance was prepared by **Judy C. Bryson** (Africare 2005)—based on input from two Africare workshops in Mozambique and Burkina Faso in 2004 concerning the need for better harmonization between programs and better incorporation of the concept of risk. For additional information contact the director of the OFFD, Africare ([offd@africare.org](mailto:offd@africare.org)).

<sup>iii</sup> MAHFP is now an indicator identified by USAID Food for Peace in its FY06-10 strategy that serves as a measure of household food access (Bilinsky and Swindale 2007). Another guidance is currently under development for MAHFP average and will be published in this series. The FANTA MAHFP guide for MAHFP average (Bilinsky and Swindale 2007) is now available on their website, but does not address qualitative PRA methods for MAHFP.

<sup>iv</sup> As indicated below, Africare recommends conducting the MAHFP annually as part of the annual update of the community action plan. The figures resulting from this analysis are important for understanding the project's impact on risk and vulnerability. They cannot be used to report the impact indicator MAHFP in the tracking table.

<sup>v</sup> It is important to emphasize that the actual number reported for the MAHFP in the IPTT must be based on information that is collected in a quantitative survey.

<sup>vi</sup> Given the new strategy of USAID and the fact most of the Title II food security programs operate mostly in food insecure areas the category titles of the households were changed from "most food secure" to "least food insecure," from "moderately food secure" to "moderately food insecure," and from "least food secure" to "Most food insecure." The calculations for the indicator (number of Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning) remain the same.

<sup>vii</sup> If possible try to collect regular data (rainfall, pests, political events, the volume of food aid [food for work and direct distribution by the project as well as other donors], as well as other assistance coming into the village from other projects) that affect the MAHFP for each of the major agro-ecological zones within the project since these can sometimes help to explain major differences in MAHFP between years.

<sup>viii</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of Africare's work on assessing risk and vulnerability under this new strategy see the Uganda and Guinea risk study reports (McMillan et al. 2006 [a] and McMillan et al. 2006 [b]).