



## Executive Brief on the DARFUR Food Security and Livelihood Assessment - 2008

### Overview, scope and methods

The ongoing crisis in Darfur, now in its sixth year, has led to the displacement of over two million people and increased vulnerability among the non-displaced population. Although a Peace Agreement was signed in 2006 the security situation remains volatile.

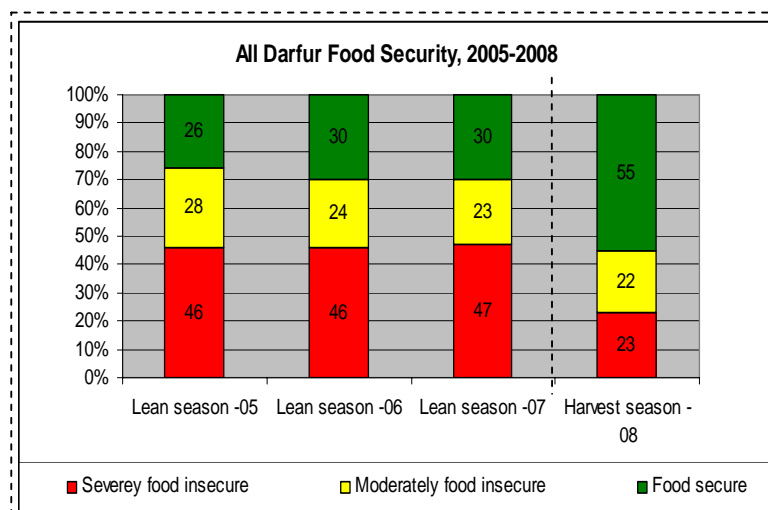
Between 26 October and 11 November 2008, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) jointly undertook a Food Security and Livelihood Assessment (DFSLA) across Darfur. The main aim was to assess the food security and livelihood situation of displaced populations and rural communities and their access to food security assistance, agricultural and other services. The assessment was also expected to identify recommendations for immediate and medium term interventions that save lives and support livelihoods as well as to identify indicators necessary for designing of an appropriate food security and livelihood monitoring system in Darfur.

Starting in 2004, this was the fifth consecutive yearly assessment carried out by the agencies since the onset of the conflict in Darfur.

**How was the assessment carried out?** A standard two-stage cluster sampling technique was used to randomly select 867 households from 43 locations (camps and villages) across the three Darfur States. Samples were designed to represent an estimated 3.7 million people affected by the ongoing conflict in Darfur, stratified by their residence status; IDP dominant, Resident dominant and Mixed communities. A structured questionnaire was used in the interview of households. Discussions with key informants were also held in all locations using semi-structured questionnaires. Results from the DFSLA household survey were complemented with gathering of relevant secondary data from multiple sources.

### How many people are food insecure?

In the DFSLA, food security of the conflict affected population was assessed at the household level on the basis of 1) adequacy and diversity of their food consumption (Food consumption Score), 2) share and amount of income spent on food and 3) the extent of their reliance on food aid.



The results show that at the start of the harvest period in 2008 some 45 percent of the households remain food insecure (23 percent severely- and 22 percent moderately) whilst 55 percent were found to be food secure. This translates to 1.7 million people<sup>1</sup> amongst the conflict affected population currently being food insecure, of which some 800,000 people are severely food insecure. It is however anticipated that the total number of food insecure may increase as well as intensify in severity during the lean season (usually April through September).

<sup>1</sup> Based on household size of 7 members as per DFSLA findings

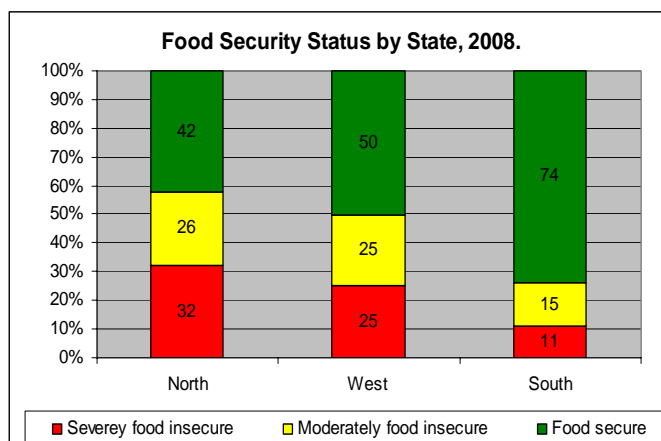
The assessment in 2008 was carried out during the harvest season whilst in previous years it was done at the peak of the lean season. Therefore caution is advised when making direct comparisons with previous years. 2008 results should therefore not necessarily be interpreted to imply that there is a lasting improvement in the food security situation in Darfur.

Adult female MUAC (Mid Upper Arm Circumference) was measured and trends indicate no improvement in the nutritional status of mothers during the past three years. Approximately 10 percent of women still have a low MUAC (<225mm as per Ministry of Health threshold used in previous years).

## Where are the people who are food insecure?

There is a great difference in food security situation between the three Darfur States. The worst food security situation is observed in North Darfur where 56 percent of the population are food insecure (32 percent severe and 26 percent moderate), followed by West Darfur where the situation is slightly better with 50 percent of the population food insecure.

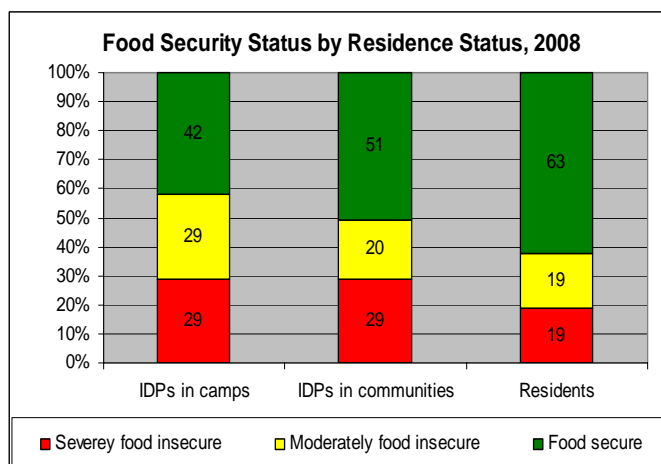
South Darfur on the other hand has a large majority of its population currently food secure (74 percent) and some 26 percent food insecure (11 severe and 15 percent moderate).



The above figures are State-wide results and may mask major variation in food security at sub-State levels (i.e. differences between localities, admin units or individual camps and villages, etc).

## Who are the people who are most food insecure?

Whilst differences in households' food security status are greater compared by state than compared by residential status, there are still major differences between IDPs in camps, IDPs in communities and residents.. In terms of food security, IDPs in camps remain the most vulnerable: 42 percent are food secure compared with 51 percent of IDPs in communities and 63 percent of residents.



When comparing the seasonal differences (August -07 with November-08) the change in food security situation of IDPs is more remarkable than of residents, indicating that even though very few IDPs cultivate crops (12 percent) they still benefit from seasonal changes such as improved availability of employment opportunities and improved purchasing power arising from lower cereal prices during harvest period.

## What are the reasons behind the change in food security?

The current positive food security outlook in South Darfur (improvement by 37 percent) may be attributed to three possible reasons;

- Preliminary estimates of the 2008/2009 harvest indicate a good cereal production and market prices have consequently started to decline.

- More cash crops (groundnuts) and vegetables are cultivated by IDPs which is expected to generate a substantial amount of cash income and thus directly influence two of the three food security indicators (food consumption and expenditure).
- A construction boom around urban centres in South Darfur has created employment opportunities for IDPs in particular, as the larger camps tend to be situated close to urban areas in the State.

North Darfur has seen a very marginal improvement (by 9 percent) in terms of food security from the lean season of 2007 to the harvest period of 2008. There are several underlying factors influencing this result:

- Crop harvest estimates in 2008/2009 for North Darfur indicate better harvest compared to 2007/2008 season. However, these estimates remain below average subsistence requirements. Currently the cost of a minimum food basket is 25 percent higher in North Darfur than in both South and West Darfur.
- Terms of trade for livestock has greatly dropped due to the high cereal prices. This negatively affects food security of predominantly livestock owning households.
- Insecurity continues to greatly hamper rural populations' access to economic activities and humanitarian assistance in North Darfur. At the time of the assessment some 250,000 people in North Darfur could not be reached with food assistance due to security problems.

Despite improvements in West Darfur compared to the assessment finding of 2007 (by 31 percent), the State's food security situation is not as promising as in South Darfur.

- The crop harvest estimates of the 2008/2009 season indicate a good cereal production. However, of all three states West Darfur has the highest number of IDPs living in camps majority of who are not cultivating.

## **Is the situation likely to change in the coming months?**

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As mentioned earlier, this year's assessment was carried out during the harvest period, contrary to previous years when it was done at the peak of the lean season. The results from this assessment are estimated to remain valid through March 2009. It is anticipated that more households may become food insecure again as the lean season approaches.

Assessment results indicate that households who have cultivated crops this year are on average self sufficient for three to six months even with the reported good harvest. This is further evidence of the precarious nature of their food security, which could worsen later in the year as they deplete their stocks and start relying on market purchases at increasing prices. It is not clear to what extent wage labour opportunities vary with seasons but it is expected that income activities could mitigate the negative impact of the lean season (stock depletion, rising cereal prices) on household food security.

## **Recommendations for interventions**

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### **Food Security Monitoring:**

- It is recommended to urgently strengthen and improve the **Food Security Monitoring System** in Darfur in order to be able to monitor seasonal changes.

### **Food Assistance:**

- Based on the results from this assessment it is recommended that WFP **maintains the reduced General Food Distribution (GFD) ration for IDPs until March**, especially in South Darfur. This ration should be reviewed and adjusted for the lean season based on timely updated food security information. Results suggest a move towards a reduced ration during months when food security improve for IDP in camps supplemented by additional support, where possible, through safety nets for the nearly 30 percent that remain severely food insecure in the camps even during harvest season.

- **Milling vouchers** that were recommended after 2007 DFSLA will be rolled out to IDP camps in 2009 and thus will partly compensate for the reduced ration, especially among severely food insecure households.
- DFSLA Findings show that there are big differences between the three States. As the conflict goes into its sixth year and some households are adapting their livelihoods, vulnerability by residency status will become less important and WFP should consider, if security permits, looking at targeting vulnerable households within these categories. The **application of one universal food aid ration for the whole Darfur should be reviewed** given large differences in food security situation between the States. WFP should work with its partners to develop a more articulated targeting strategy and find a way to meet the needs in the evolving environment of Darfur. Accordingly, more context specific interventions would be needed, including different rations and timeframes.
- Mixed communities have in the past been considered as IDPs when it comes to food assistance. It is recommended that assistance to them is to be more in line with residents and ration size should be based on geographical food security criteria and seasonality (i.e. targeted assistance during the lean season).
- **Enhanced blanket supplementary feeding**, should continue in North Darfur for all children less than 5 years in households receiving GFD. It is recommended that the improved CSB (include milk powder) used in the North should be used in curative supplementary feeding programmes in South and West Darfur as well.
- **Safety net programmes** are highly recommended as WFP adjusts rations according to the food security situation of the food insecure. However, targeting these households or individuals through additional support is necessary but may pose a difficult challenge.
- The low MUAC rate among women has not reduced in the past three years and is related to food insecurity. It is recommended to explore the possibility of including **women with low MUAC** in supplementary feeding programmes as a way of targeting food insecure households. In order to improve food security, the ration for these households should be a family ration rather than an individual ration.

#### **Agriculture and Livelihood Support:**

**Agricultural products and agricultural labour** remain important source of income and food. Attention must therefore be paid towards sustaining these livelihood sources.

- Targeted Agricultural support should increasingly be provided to communities, including IDPs with access to land, with particular emphasis on cash- and food crops. Therefore it is important to adjust the agricultural support package to match average cultivated land size and increasing package for important cash crops such as ground nuts and vegetables with the aim to :
  - Promote **improvement in crop production per unit area** for the main food security crops (cereals) by sustainable intensification of production within limited accessible land. Sustainable methods of yield intensification should include promotion of mixed and inter-cropping with nitrogen-fixing leguminous plants, use of manure, and agro-forestry.
  - Promote **labour saving technologies** in agricultural production and small scale irrigation, where applicable.
  - Enhance **community level farm protection initiatives** through dialogue at community level to improve access to the farmland by both IDPs and residents.
  - Strengthen and promote **community based agricultural extension services** (para-agriculturalists and farmer's field schools facilitators) in collaboration with State Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation and State Ministries of Animal Resources and Fisheries.

- Non-agricultural income and production of cash crops outside the rainy season are important to help households shorten the food gap during the lean season. There is need to **increase/expand support towards livelihood and alternative income generating activities** with particular emphasis on;
  - Explore and support economically viable household level enterprises (both on farm and off farm) to enhance household incomes.
  - Expand off rainy season agricultural production in low lying areas to support household incomes necessary for market food access and bridging of household food gaps.
  - **Restore and protect environmental resources** in areas of high reliance on natural resources for income generation, since direct exploration of natural resources (sale of firewood, brick making and grass) remain major household income sources especially among households with limited income generating options.
- Livestock vaccination and treatment of animal diseases remain crucial to protect livestock assets, but **livestock support should be strategically expanded** for the most food insecure households:
  - Explore possibilities of **rehabilitating veterinary out-posts to provide veterinary services** on regular basis and expand services provided at the veterinary posts to cover for key veterinary problems in targeted communities.
  - **Strengthen livestock husbandry and performance in urban and semi-urban settings**, including IDP camps by improved cut-and carry fodder systems and community breeding systems.

**General:**

Lasting peace and human security in Darfur should remain the ultimate and foremost goal to be pursued by the parties to the conflict and the international community, as it is the necessary basis for a durable improvement of food security and the rebuilding of livelihoods. Meanwhile, given the protracted nature of the crisis in Darfur, assistance modalities should be reviewed and, where necessary and feasible, realigned in a way that promotes self-reliance and resilience.

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