

Annex C

An Expanded Conceptual Framework

FFP and its partners developed an expanded conceptual framework that adds the dimension of risk and vulnerability to the conceptual framework that was laid out in the 1995 “Food Aid and Food Security Policy.” The conceptual framework laid out in the 1995 Policy, with its focus on food availability, access and utilization, provided a good underpinning for the new directions that were given to the program at that time. It also was a useful place to start in the development of this Strategy. However, this basic framework does not provide a way to take into account the vulnerability of countries, communities and households to risk -- a shortcoming that seems particularly serious in retrospect, in the aftermath of the many natural and manmade disasters that characterized the 1990s.

The dimension of risk is implicit in USAID’s definition of food security. That is, the inclusion of the phrase “at all times” in the definition suggests that food security can only be achieved when the risk of falling below adequate levels of availability, access and utilization is very low. Operationally, however, the focus has been on increasing the levels of food availability, access and utilization – with less emphasis given to the risk of losing the ability to obtain and use food. In contrast, this Strategy will require FFP and its partners to pay more attention to addressing food insecurity through a focus on reducing vulnerability and risk.

Vulnerability means that food security can be lost as well as gained. Vulnerability also can be thought of as the inability to manage risk. When countries, communities and households are unable to cope effectively with shocks or hazards, in fact or potentially, they are vulnerable and potential candidates for assistance. Reducing exposure to risks, such as shocks that affect the many (e.g., droughts or floods) or shocks that affect the individual (e.g., death of the head of a household) can help reduce vulnerability. Increasing the ability to manage risks also reduces vulnerability. (See Annex II for a further discussion of vulnerability and its relationship to food secure, fragile, failing and failed states).

All states are subject to shocks – occasional and recurrent. What distinguishes a food secure state from fragile, failing or failed states is its ability to cope with these shocks. The level of economic development has a major influence on a country’s ability to cope. Wealthier countries normally cope better with shocks than poorer countries, for example, but wealth or income alone is a poor indicator of vulnerability. Other political, social, and economic factors also are important. States where large inequities in incomes and assets (access to resources) exist are likely to be more vulnerable, as are states with large ethnic populations (also religious groups) that are not well integrated economically, politically or socially. Weak institutions, or the absence of key institutions, also increase vulnerability, as does poor governance. Armed conflict can also be an indicator as well as a consequence of the failure of countries to deal effectively with shocks, and it also increases the vulnerability of countries, communities and households to future shocks. In

a food security context, in other words, states can be fragile as a result of underlying political, social and economic factors, and not just weak institutions.

High levels of chronic under-nutrition can also be an indicator of the vulnerability of countries, communities and households to shocks. During emergencies the focus is on acute undernutrition -- i.e., people who are wasted (too thin for their height). This form of undernutrition is a serious problem because individuals who are severely wasted, particularly young children, can easily die. But chronic undernutrition, which is the term used to describe people who are stunted (i.e., too short for their age), can also be a serious problem. Chronic undernutrition reduces people's ability to cope because it reduces their productivity while increasing their vulnerability to illnesses. Children who are chronically undernourished are also more vulnerable to illness and death. In addition, when chronic undernutrition affects children early in life (between six and 24 months), it will also reduce their ability to cope as adults, make them more vulnerable to chronic illnesses throughout their lives, and impair their motor skills, cognitive abilities and productivity.

This focus on vulnerability helps clarify the rationale for assistance prior to, as well as during and immediately after, a shock. Countries, communities and households will need assistance when they are in the midst of an emergency, overwhelmed by a shock (e.g., a hurricane, drought, or financial or political crises). But for the more vulnerable, assistance *prior* to major shocks is also needed to help them take preventative actions to reduce risk, increase coping capacity and reduce the likelihood that they will be overwhelmed by the next shock and need emergency assistance.

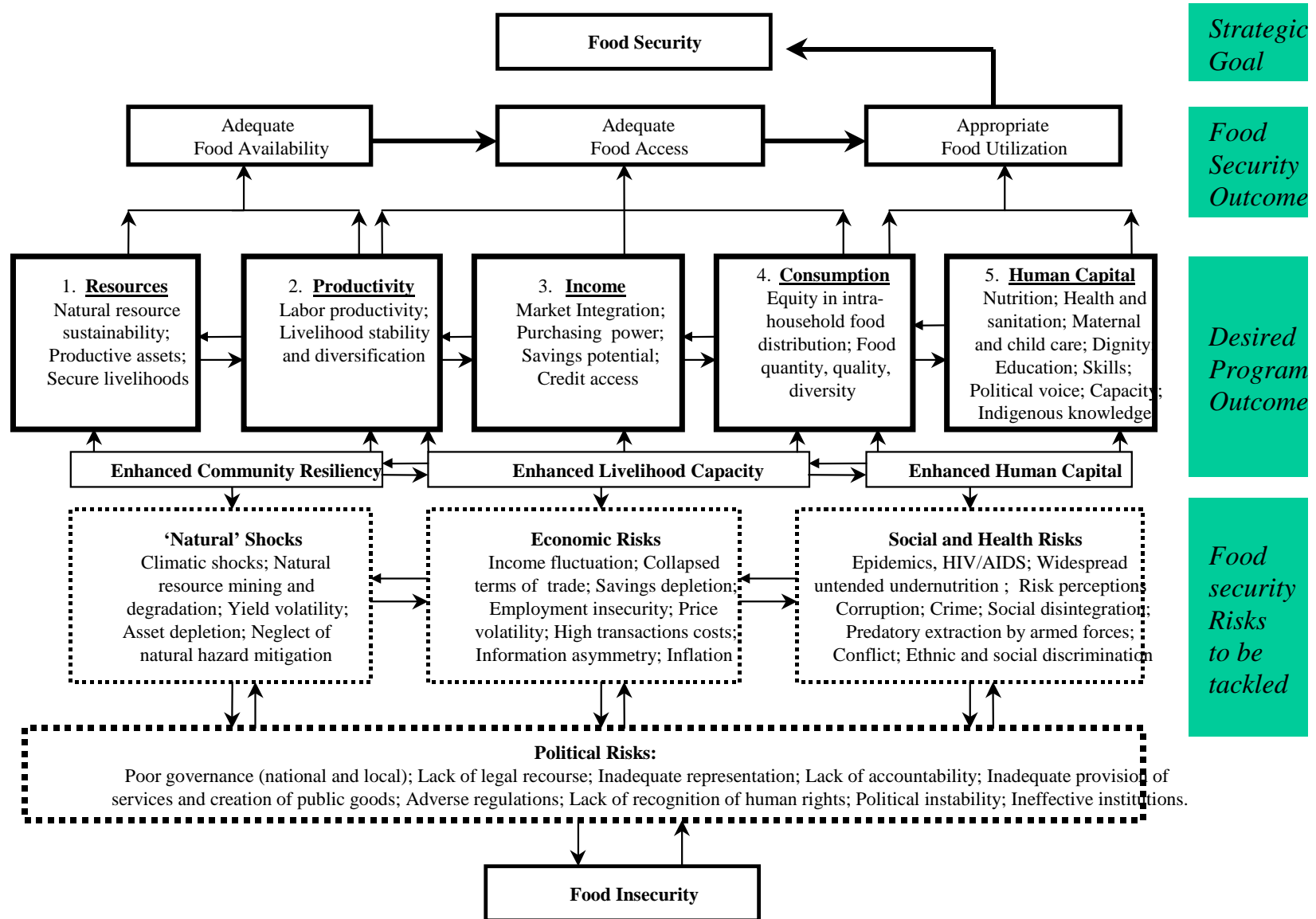
To rectify this shortcoming, and after extensive technical analyses and stakeholder consultations, FFP is proposing to add the dimension of vulnerability to this Strategy. Conceptually, this will mean expanding the basic food security framework to include a new dimension – risk – that makes explicit the risks that constrain or threaten food availability, access and utilization. Operationally, this will mean reorienting programs so that the vulnerability of food insecure households and communities is addressed more directly, focusing more on prevention and helping countries, communities and households cope or manage risk better.

This expanded framework is laid out in Figure 1. The basic food security framework is presented in the upper part of the diagram, with the desired food security outcomes leading to the goal of improved food security. And, the major risks that must be tackled to achieve food security and their links to the desired program and food security outcomes are identified in the bottom of the framework. As this expanded conceptual framework demonstrates, understanding risk is essential to understanding the concept of food security – it underlies everything. Unmanaged risk leads to food insecurity, while managing risks can protect and enhance food security.

Risks, as the expanded framework makes clear, come from many sources. Food supply can be affected by climatic fluctuations, for example, depletion of soil fertility, or the loss of a household's productive assets. Factors that can disrupt access to markets include

changes in policies or global terms of trade, a disruption of markets during crises, or risks stemming from the insecurity of non-farm incomes. Food access can be negatively affected by physical insecurity stemming from conflict, for example, loss of livelihood or coping options (such as border closings that prevent seasonal job migration) or the collapse of safety-net institutions that once protected people with low incomes. Factors that can impair food utilization include epidemic diseases, lack of appropriate nutrition knowledge or socio-cultural practices that affect access to nutritious foods according to

Figure 1: An Expanded Conceptual Framework for Understanding Food Insecurity



age or gender. Political risks, including the lack of good governance, can exacerbate natural, economic, social and health risks.

The expanded conceptual framework encourages a stronger emphasis on livelihoods and assets, and the need to support consumption indicators and invest in nutrition, education and skills development, roads and other public works, and social capital. It also encourages a greater focus on prevention, including prevention of damage to physical assets and livelihoods. The focus on prevention also has a generational dimension, encouraging early investment in infant nutrition to prevent undernutrition. The expanded framework also provides a logic for providing emergency assistance to food secure states, as well as emergency and non-emergency assistance to fragile, failing and failed states. In addition, it incorporates a rationale for responding to HIV/AIDS and for interventions targeted to food insecurity in urban areas, if analyses of risk and vulnerabilities indicate that these are the areas where the new priorities lie.