According to the United Nations, “Extreme hunger and malnutrition remain a barrier to sustainable development and create a trap from which people cannot easily escape. Hunger and malnutrition mean less productive individuals, who are more prone to disease and thus often unable to earn more and improve their livelihoods”.

A large part of the world’s population continues to suffer from hunger. Many of these people live in rural areas and yet contribute to feeding the world as farmers, pastoralists and fishermen. According to the UN, it is estimated that:

- **1 out of 9 people in the world is undernourished.** i.e. 815 million have access to less than 1,800 kilocalories per adult per day.
- **Malnutrition is the cause of nearly half (45%) of all deaths** among children under five each year.
- **The agriculture sector is the world’s largest employer.** The livelihoods of 40% of today’s world population depend on it, being the main source of income and of employment for poor rural households. 500 million small farms provide up to 80% of the food consumed in developing countries.
- **Each year, an estimated one-third of all food produced, the equivalent of 1.3 billion tons, ends up in consumers and retailers bins or deteriorates due to poor transportation and harvesting practices.**
- **Soil degradation, declining soil fertility, excessive water use, overfishing and the deterioration of the seabed** are all factors that deplete natural resources and their capacity to produce food. Land grabbing for non-agricultural uses also contributes to reducing available resources.
- **As a result of global warming, when the temperature rises by one degree, the production of cereals, a key staple food, decreases by about 5%** (IPCC).

ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND ECONOMIC SECURITY IN THE FACE OF POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, CLIMATIC AND SANITARY SHOCKS

1 Sustainable Development Goals, UN
2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity or lack of access to sufficient food in quantity and quality to meet dietary needs has multiple causes: difficulty in accessing income to purchase food or agricultural inputs to produce it, limited availability of diversified foods in markets, poor food practices coupled with health conditions that are not conducive to the proper assimilation of nutrients by the body, etc. Vulnerability to food insecurity is intrinsically linked to the vulnerability of livelihoods to various shocks: social, political, climatic, health and economic. Livelihoods enable access to food through production (agriculture) or income.

According to the 2020 Global Food Crisis Report, the main factors contributing to food insecurity are 1) conflict and insecurity, 2) extreme climatic shocks, 3) economic shocks. To a lesser extent, the following factors also aggravate food insecurity: crop, livestock and human diseases.

1. Conflicts: During conflicts, civilians are often deprived of their sources of income; food systems and markets are disrupted, resulting in higher prices and/or reduced availability of food and productive commodities and tools. Conflicts prevent businesses from operating and weaken the national economy, thus reducing employment opportunities for the population. Food insecurity can also be a factor that exacerbates violence and instability. (FAO et al., 2017).

2. Climatic shocks: Sudden (floods) or slow-onset climatic shocks (drought) affect the livelihoods of populations, especially agropastoralists who highly depend on natural resources. Land is degraded, crops are destroyed, while herds struggle to find drinking water and sufficient pasture. This can lead to conflict among these communities. Besides the economic impact on agropastoralist populations, the degradation of crops and livestock can affect populations who rely on locally-grown products or who depend on agricultural employment as their main source of income. Adding to this is the impact that natural disasters can have on productive and market infrastructures: roads, bridges, dams, buildings, irrigation networks, etc.

3. Economic shocks: Shocks such as inflation, currency depreciation, loss of jobs, loss of income, financial speculation or destabilisation of import/export flows cause food insecurity because they lead to decreased purchasing power, reduced availability of commodities and loss of income. Countries with weak economic institutions (large debts, import dependency) or facing conflicts are particularly vulnerable to these shocks. The populations most affected by these are those employed in the informal sector, with low and unstable incomes and without social protection systems.

4. Health shocks (epidemics, pandemics, malnutrition): Malnutrition is a disease, the underlying causes of which are the lack of access to food, a poor health environment and inadequate care practices. Other non-foodborne diseases (e.g. waterborne diseases), by weakening the body, can affect a sick person’s capacity to properly assimilate nutrients. This can consequently affect his or her work ability and livelihood. At a regional or national level, an epidemic can also affect the food market system due to movement restrictions or border closures.

5. Crop and livestock diseases: Crop pests such as desert locusts or armyworms and animal diseases such as sheep and goat plague or swine fever can cause massive crop and animal losses, and impact farmers’ and breeders’ livelihoods and the availability of food products on local and national markets.

Cover photo: Support to gardening in Gado camp in Garoua Boulai, Cameroon © SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL
The overall objective of Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL) interventions is to ensure sustainable food and economic security for populations vulnerable to political, socio-economic, climatic and health shocks.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL’s FSL interventions particularly pursue 4 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promoted by the United Nations: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1); End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (Goal 2); Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Goal 12); Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Goal 13).

In line with its global logic of intervention, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL’s FSL activities fall under 3 different phases of intervention to reach this overall objective (represented in the following figure):

1. **Shock absorption**
   Following a shock, vulnerable populations lose their capacity to access food, either through their own production or by purchasing it on local markets. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL improves the coverage of basic needs, especially food. When the context allows, cash transfers are used as a modality of assistance (cash, vouchers) to protect the local economy; otherwise, in-kind distributions are organised. This assistance takes into account the specific needs of the people affected (gender, age and diversity approach) and helps to limit the use of negative coping strategies that can affect household food security and livelihoods (sale of productive assets such as seeds or livestock).

2. **Early recovery**
   Once these needs have been covered, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL supports households to **revive economic activities by providing productive assets** such as seeds, livestock or fishing equipment, and by **supporting Income-Generating Activities** (IGAs) (petty trade, food processing, etc.). Trainings complement this material support to strengthen technical and business management skills. In parallel, this economic recovery also benefits from the rehabilitation of infrastructures: reconstruction of markets, road rehabilitation, drainage of agricultural fields, etc. All these activities are implemented in collaboration with the relevant government technical services.
3. Risk preparedness and adaptation

Finally, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL strengthens the resilience of the livelihoods of vulnerable populations so that they are better prepared and able to cope with future shocks. Based on an assessment of livelihood capacities and vulnerabilities, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL adapts its response at the household level to:

- strengthen existing livelihoods (e.g. distribution of drought-resistant seeds, promotion of sustainable irrigation practices, construction of resilient infrastructure), or
- support the diversification of sources of income (e.g. vocational training, small business management).

Through the value chain approach, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL reinforces the adaptation capacities of actors along these chains (e.g. producers, agricultural technical services, input suppliers, etc.). Community solidarity systems are also strengthened (i.e. Village Savings and Loans Associations).

Finally, in support to all these interventions, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL carries out awareness-raising campaigns on best food and nutritional practices to ensure that food is used according to the specific needs of household members. Integration between FSL, WaSH and Health interventions is key to prevent food and nutrition insecurity by ensuring access to food and safe practices as well as to WaSH and health services for good health. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL joins forces with health partners in the fight against malnutrition, by detecting and referring cases of severe acute malnutrition.

It should be noted that these three types of intervention can coexist in the same area at the same time, and that the operational modalities must be adapted dynamically according to the evolution of the context, access conditions, population movements and the needs of the different social groups and communities involved.

4 https:/ /www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fr/ poverty/
5 https:/ /www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fr/ hunger/
SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL reaffirms its commitment to an adapted, qualitative and high-impact humanitarian response, targeting in priority the health, dignity and well-being of vulnerable populations affected by crisis. In line with SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL’s general objective to “support the most vulnerable people affected by crises to better cope and pursue their future prospects”, the FSL sector has the long-term objective of ensuring sustainable food and economic security for these people. To contribute to the achievement of this objective, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL intends to concentrate its efforts on three programmatic lines of work for 2020-2025.

**AXIS 1**
INTEGRATING FSL IN EMERGENCY RESPONSES

- Integrate an FSL response in existing Rapid Response Mechanisms at SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL;
- Systematically integrate a food security and livelihood analysis when conducting a needs assessment;
- Systematically integrate the market analysis of basic items and services (food and non-food) when conducting a needs assessment to promote market-based programming;
- Cover immediate food and non-food needs (corresponding to food basket or minimum expenditure basket when relevant) through a response adapted to the context and to household and local markets capacities;
- Actively participate in humanitarian coordination in national Food Security clusters and Cash Working Groups, and to the improvement of humanitarian practices through the Global Food Security Cluster working groups;
- Consider the relevance of FSL post-crisis early recovery responses as early as the emergency phase (restoring livelihoods through the distribution of productive assets, supporting market recovery, etc.).

**AXIS 2**
ALERT, ANTICIPATE AND PREDICT FSL NEEDS IN THE FACE OF CHRONIC SHOCKS

- Actively participate in existing food and nutritional security surveillance systems to trigger early alerts, to better prepare humanitarian actors through the development of contingency plans and early action;
- Conduct the regular monitoring of markets (basic items and services) to feed into surveillance systems;
- Cover seasonal/cyclical food and nutritional needs via targeted food assistance and referral of acute malnutrition cases of children under 5 years to health actors;
- Promote social safety nets programmes in coherence with populations’ specific needs, the socio-economic and cultural context and existing social protection systems;
- Link social safety nets programmes to relevant complementary activities to increase their impacts (i.e. information to influence behavior change, trainings, increased access to quality services, etc.);
- Actively participate in national and international fora about cash transfer and social safety nets and develop a technical advocacy strategy directed at the humanitarian community - especially donors - pleading for a reasonable and relevant use of the aforementioned intervention modalities.

**AXIS 3**
DEVELOP THE LONG-TERM ADAPTIVE CAPACITIES OF FOOD & ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

- Promote the systematic use of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework as a multisectoral analysis framework in FSL programmes as well as in WaSH and Shelter;
- Support the development of key food value chains with a focus on the inclusion of the most vulnerable households in the local economy;
- Promote a Market-Based Programming approach to strengthen capacities on both the demand side (cash and voucher assistance) and the supply side (material and organisational support to market actors, value chain support);
- Reinforce households’ coping capacities when facing natural disasters through the development of innovative programmes and the promotion of sustainable practices (use of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation approaches);
- Contribute to social cohesion via actions addressing the underlying factors of conflicts (i.e. concerted management of natural resources, capacity building of civil society organisations, etc.).
The Livelihoods approach to identify vulnerabilities and capacities

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL aims to restore and strengthen people’s livelihoods to improve their sustainability and thus their resilience. This resilience enables people to better prepare for and overcome situations of stress or shock, while ensuring that vital needs are covered on the long term. As early as the assessment phase, it is possible to identify the following elements by using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework:
1) the geographical areas most vulnerable to shocks, 2) the vulnerabilities and capacities of each group, 3) the coping strategies (positive or negative) of populations in the face of shocks. This livelihoods analysis framework is flexible and should be used dynamically as livelihoods are constantly evolving. The analysis is done with the participation of the communities and supports the design of interventions aiming at strengthening their resilience.

Beneficiaries at the core of FSL responses

In line with organisational commitments, FSL interventions integrate protection principles at all stages of the project cycle, in order to optimise their quality. As such, the design of interventions promotes the mainstreaming of protection issues in assessments, the use of accountability and participation approaches and mechanisms, and systematises the implementation of protection measures against all forms of violence and attacks on the well-being and dignity of populations. In accordance with the principles of protection, FSL interventions respect the complementarity of humanitarian action and encourage the pooling of agencies’ expertise, in particular through the set-up of functional processes for the referral and follow-up of protection cases with the competent entities.

Responses that promote sustainable, environment-friendly practices

The “do no harm” approach, a constituent part of humanitarian action, must apply to both social and environmental dimensions. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL analyses, as early as the assessment phase, the impact of crises and of the organisation’s interventions on the environment in order to limit them, particularly by managing its equipment and waste responsibly. Moreover, this commitment implies that responses are designed to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices by beneficiary populations, which should also contribute to strengthening their resilience capacities. These populations include agro-pastoral communities, who are highly dependent on natural resources (water, land, forest, etc.) for their livelihoods and are therefore particularly vulnerable to climatic shocks and the degradation of these resources.
Progressive improvement of FSL responses through continuous analysis and innovation

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is committed to delivering effective, relevant and responsive programmes that are tailored to the needs and temporality of crises. Before being implemented, each intervention is thus based on a preliminary situational analysis of the context and needs, to be regularly updated and completed. This iterative analysis process continuously informs programmatic intervention strategies, including the choice of the most relevant operational modalities and adjustments during implementation when necessary. In terms of aid modalities, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL promotes cash transfers or vouchers as the preferred intervention modality to support the local economy, and in-kind distributions as a last resort when the context requires it. Furthermore, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL strongly encourages innovation and research in its intervention contexts in order to propose new approaches that maximise the quality, efficiency and relevance of the responses implemented.

Public health, the junction point of the FSL and WaSH sectors

The FSL and WaSH sectors together contribute to the prevention and reduction of malnutrition and “infectious” diseases caused, among other things, by bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Escherichia coli* et *Vibrio cholera* (particularly related to inadequate hygiene and food practices and/or limited access to safe drinking water and sanitation services). It is therefore essential to have a public health lens in order to systematise integrated approaches, and, by consequent, strengthen the public health impact of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL’s programmes. This translates into a common understanding of the “determinants of health”, of the causal links between FSL and WaSH issues and of the prevalence of diseases, but also into a close collaboration with health actors and the use of common public health indicators. With this approach, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL can better anticipate, prepare and respond to epidemics.

Collective effort: the importance of coordination and partnership

Finally, adhering to the principle that the coordination of humanitarian response is essential to the quality of the aid provided, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is committed to contributing to the continuous improvement of coordination mechanisms by actively participating in the Global Food Security Cluster and other initiatives in the sector or linked to cross-cutting approaches (CaLP, Markets in Crisis, UNDRR, REPR). In the field, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is thus a key interlocutor within national and local coordination mechanisms, and proactively exchanges information on its operations. SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is part of many NGO consortia, and partners with various local actors (NGOs, public and private) as often as possible. The objectives of these collaborations are many: to improve the understanding of the context and needs, to promote peer-to-peer exchanges on expertise and, finally, to increase the impact of humanitarian interventions in order to ensure the food and economic security of populations affected by crises.

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THE ROADMAP AND GLOSSARY ASSOCIATED TO THIS STRATEGY ARE PRESENTED AS ANNEXES.

8 SI, Framework document “Promoting resilient livelihoods at Solidarités International”, 2017
9 DFID, Guidance sheets on sustainable livelihoods, 1999
10 SI, Operational Framework, 2016 and SI Environmental Policy (to be published)
11 SI, Operational Framework, 2016
12 Food Security Cluster, 2020-2022 Strategic Plan

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Report
Deputy Direction of Operations for Programmes

Design
Frédéric Javelaud - April 2020

Illustration
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