

**UN Standing Committee on Nutrition  
Task Force on Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation  
Areas of Work for 2008-10**

**A. Introduction and background**

This document has been prepared based on the ‘Principles and Strategic Elements’ and ‘Key Activity Areas’ specified in the SCN *Strategic Framework* approved at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of SCN in March 2006<sup>1</sup>. In its vision of a ‘world where hunger and malnutrition are no longer impediments to human development’, the SCN *Action Plan 2006-2010*<sup>2</sup> accompanying the Strategic Framework has called for a Task Force on Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation (TF-AME) in support of one of five priority areas for action<sup>3</sup>. The key activity area for TF-AME is described as follows:

*Track and report on progress towards achieving the MDGs and other nutrition-related goals, including nutrition-related chronic diseases (NRCDS), in both development and humanitarian aid settings.*

Concrete progress in this key action area is expected to contribute in particular to the second specific objective in the *Action Plan*, namely: “to establish a **common understanding** [...] of hunger and malnutrition across all UN agencies, ministerial sectors and development actors”, thus placing emphasis on providing guidance for **joint action** in the context of various assessment, monitoring and evaluation initiatives, methods and techniques. This is further reinforced in a subsequent paragraph where the Action Plan states that the “task forces will seek to **harmonize and capitalize** on the related work being done across the various constituents of the SCN”.

Hence, while the Task Force is expected to report on progress made towards broad development objectives (MDGs and other nutrition-related goals/targets), it is also expected to review and provide guidance on various **assessment** and **monitoring functions** of SCN partners, while also supporting the **evaluation** of programmes, policies and interventions.

In light of the above, a number of objectives and associated activities have been identified for the TF-AME and are illustrated below. These are to be discussed, refined and endorsed by the TF members and to be translated into a concrete work plan and terms of reference (TORs) for the TF-AME itself.

Table of Content

A. Introduction & background ..... p.1  
 B. Objectives for 2008-10 .....p.2  
 C. Cross-cutting themes & guiding principles.. p.2  
 D. Start-up Activities for the TF-AME .....p.3  
 E. Immediate steps before Hanoi session.....p.6  
 F. Task Force composition.....p.7

<sup>1</sup> SCN Strategic Framework. Available at: [www.unsystem.org/scn/Publications/strategic\\_framework200604.pdf](http://www.unsystem.org/scn/Publications/strategic_framework200604.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> SCN Action Plan 2006-2010. Available at: [www.unsystem.org/scn/publications/action\\_plan\\_200604.doc](http://www.unsystem.org/scn/publications/action_plan_200604.doc)

<sup>3</sup> The other four key areas are: (1) advocacy, communication and partnership building; (2) development of integrated approaches; (3) the mainstreaming of human rights; and (4) identifying key scientific and operational gaps.

## B. Objectives for 2008-10

Based on the overall guidance provided by the SCN Strategic Framework and Action Plan, the TF-AME has established the following key objectives and functions for itself to direct its work over the next three years:

1. Given the important role of **indicators** in conducting work on AME, and based on a wide variety of work carried out in this field in the context of achieving MDGs, and including more specific **food, care and health** objectives and nutrition outcomes, the TF-AME will aim to:
  - a) Establish an agreed-upon **minimum set of core indicators** on food deprivation and malnutrition that would be acceptable to members involved in all areas of development and humanitarian work; the indicators would cover the three key areas of **food, care and health**.
  - b) Distinguish indicators at different levels of aggregation, depending on the clients of the AME services (local-regional-global) and identify different modes of action per area of information (i.e. link information to action).
2. In line with SCN objectives of arriving at a '*common understanding*', '*harmonised approaches*' and '*joint action*', provide a **forum** where members can **exchange information** on best practices, tools, methods and approaches in assessment, monitoring and evaluation.
3. Similar to the idea of a forum, the TF-AME may serve as a **sounding board** on AME matters, based on demand expressed by the SCN Working Groups, various inter-agency initiatives (such as the IASC), or individual SCN member institutions; this could entail providing technical feedback, or peer reviewing, proposed inter-agency activities and outputs.

## C. Cross-cutting themes and guiding principles

In carrying out its work, the SCN Task Force on AME will place particular emphasis on the following cross-cutting themes and/or guiding principles:

1. Link the work done in the *development and humanitarian aid* settings, recognizing that the two should not be thought of separately. Systems and structures need to be in place in crisis prone areas, with a capacity to serve the crisis when it occurs.
2. Linking *health and nutrition to food security and livelihoods* (in the context of the MDGs)

Both the Strategic Framework and the Action Plan (2006-2010) place the work of the SCN Task Forces in the broader context of the MDGs, in particular MDG1 concerned with the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, while recognising the direct and indirect relevance of other MDGs. Traditionally, nutrition has been more closely associated with health, often forgetting about the food-related aspect. As elaborated above, the TF-AME will organise its work around three core areas related to food, health and care. It is therefore important to ensure that the assessment, monitoring and evaluation on health, care and nutrition concerns are linked to food security issues and to broader contextual analysis of poverty and sustainable livelihoods<sup>4</sup>. This means that the Task Force on AME will have to examine assessment, monitoring and evaluation issues that link health and nutrition concerns to the underlying development ones.

3. Considering indicators and associated actions related to all geographical levels: *global, regional and local*.

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<sup>4</sup> FAO 2003. International Scientific Symposium Proceedings. "Measurement and Assessment of Food Deprivation and Undernutrition". [www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4249E/y4249e00.htm](http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4249E/y4249e00.htm)

## **D. Start-up Activities for SCN Task Force on Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation**

### ***D.1 Establish a common set of indicators and link them to relevant AME frameworks***

Over the years, a number of conceptual frameworks have been developed linking the concepts of food security, livelihoods, health and nutrition. In spite of differences between them, they share a core set of building blocks that have broad inter-agency agreement (i.e. aspects related to food, health and care). One of the main activities of the Task Force in line with the SCN strategy, which calls for the “identification and monitoring of causes of malnutrition within a livelihoods framework”, would therefore be that of:

- agreeing on a core (minimum) set of indicators that would suit constituents in different sectors and that could be used for AME purposes in different development and humanitarian contexts (e.g. chronic poverty, crisis, transitional situations, post-crisis, chronic food insecurity) and at all levels (community, country, global).

The agreed upon list of indicators would allow the different development partners to come to a common understanding of underlying issues (e.g. through situation analysis) and of how the situation evolves or changes following interventions (development support) as well as after shocks (relief, recovery). This will include agreement on ways of monitoring and evaluating impacts and outcomes. In defining a core set of indicators, the TF-AME will draw upon and consolidate both nutrition measures and outcomes used in development contexts (as in: FAO 2005, ‘Nutrition Indicators for Development’), and the wealth of information on AME that has been developed in the emergency/humanitarian context. The outcome would be a list of indicators that apply to various crisis and post-crisis situations as well as in chronic poverty and development contexts. Among others, the TF-AME will need to maintain a close working relationship with the SCN Working Groups on Household Food Security and Nutrition in Emergencies, while also drawing from OCHA’s current work on compiling an inventory of assessment initiatives in emergencies.

The TF-AME will draw relevant lessons for application in the broader sphere of use and interpretation of nutritional data in development and poverty programmes as well as in conflict and transitional contexts.

The TF-AME will also examine ways in which indicators can best be organised, separating impact, outcome and key context indicators for understanding results, from process-oriented indicators. An initial matrix along these lines to start a discussion amongst TF members and to compare indicators for different purposes is presented below. A key part of discussions will relate to the SCN’s request for “linking health and nutrition to food security and livelihoods (in the context of the MDGs)”.

**Table 1: Proposed matrix for organising different indicators on food, health and care**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Care</i>	<i>Relevance to A, M, E</i>	<i>Relevance to monitoring MDG progress</i>
Context indicators (e.g. vulnerability context, policies, institutions)					
Process indicators					
Impact indicators (outputs, nutritional status)					
Outcome indicators (changes in approach to nutrition)					

Care will be taken to distinguish between global/national level indicators, from those that are more suited to community and household levels, and others that measure individual outcomes. There may also be a need to distinguish between indicators appropriate for acute crisis contexts, transitional contexts, post-crisis and chronic food insecurity contexts. Existing programmes in pilot countries could be identified to help illustrate this.

Other considerations the TF will note are current reliability, coverage, and costs.

Other activities in this area of work would include:

- identifying existing M&E frameworks incorporating or relevant to nutritional impact, such as the “triple-A” and various forms of participatory evaluation
- means of sharing or developing joint methods and tools for data collection and analysis
- discuss added value by the TF to MDG tracking, while working towards country- level advice on relevant AME

## ***D.2 Linking information to action***

The TF-AME needs to address two fundamental questions, which relate to the need to shed greater clarity on:

- **who** does it identify as its main clients or target audience? and
- **what action** does the TF-AME want to inform or influence?

As stated above, the TF is expected to provide guidance to the SCN Steering Committee and to its Working Groups. Other actors however should benefit from the TF’s support, including development partners more generally and local actors for more effective country- and sub-national-level action (i.e. at district, community and household levels).

Below is a schematic landscape of four levels of actors and action areas and some (very few) examples of information system activities as they relate to AME:

Actors & Action Areas	Purpose Of Information Systems Activities		
	assessment	monitoring	evaluation
<b>level 1: community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community development planning of FS/N activities</li> <li>• extension work</li> <li>• raising awareness</li> </ul>	- participatory appraisal for intervention projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- growth monitoring</li> <li>- Health facility data</li> </ul>	- M&E of local small-scale projects (usually externally driven)
<b>level 2: district</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development planning</li> <li>• prioritization</li> <li>• targeting</li> </ul>	- rapid, ad hoc, assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sentinel site surveillance</li> </ul>	- M&E of specific intervention programmes (usually externally driven)
<b>level 3: national</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy formulation</li> <li>• development of national FS/N strategies, programmes</li> <li>• budget prioritization</li> <li>• fundraising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- repeated national surveys (nutrition, hh budget, agric, ..)</li> <li>- census</li> <li>- baseline assessment</li> <li>- analytical studies</li> <li>- research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- national routine statistics</li> <li>- monitoring and surveillance of programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-M&amp;E of specific intervention programmes</li> <li>-Impact assessment</li> </ul>
<b>level 4: global</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advocacy</li> <li>• global initiatives</li> <li>• cross-country comparison</li> <li>• fundraising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-United Nations agencies' international data banks</li> <li>-Global assessments studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-global studies on trend analyses</li> </ul>	- M&E on intervention programmes

The majority of AME efforts in the systematic search for information, and development of methods and tools therein, have responded to the demand of the actors and actions at the levels 3 and 4 (i.e. national and global action). However, much less strategic focus has been placed to actors and actions at the first 2 levels where the primary responsibility for action lies in support of the populations and their district-level authorities. Experience shows that more emphasis needs to be placed on the 'action' part and less on the 'information' side.

The TF's role will be that of identifying useful modes of action linked to the identified indicators, and may commission review work leading to linking each of the cells in the table above to examples of good practice in terms of indicator-based or evidence-based action.

### ***D.3 Liaise closely with and provide support to SCN Task Forces, SCN Working Groups, and relevant interagency and agency activities***

As mentioned above, the role of the TF-AME should not be that of 'reinventing the wheel'. Much is taking place in terms of AME work, both in humanitarian and development settings. In its effort to harmonize and capitalize upon existing AME work, the TF needs to liaise closely with a number of actors. This would entail as a first step reviewing the approach and working methods adopted by the other two cross-cutting SCN Task Forces (Advocacy/Communication and Integrated Approaches), the SCN WGs' work plans, and offering support on issues related to AME. Other relevant interagency and agency initiatives outside the SCN with whom close liaison is key, include:

- IASC Clusters working on assessment tools (e.g. Post-Disaster Needs Assessment-PDNA managed by UNDP under the auspices of the Early Warning Cluster and the Assessment Sub-Working Group of the IASC Nutrition Cluster)

- FAO Nutrition Division-led D-group on “Bridging Food Security and Nutrition Indicators” (mentioned below)
- Other agency work on linking nutrition with food security and livelihoods (IFAD?)
- the Humanitarian Health and Nutrition Tracking Service (HNNTS)
- inter-agency work on developing a standard way of classifying food insecurity (e.g. based on the Integrated Phase Classification System – IPC)
- OCHA CAP-NAF
- Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA) managed by the World Bank.

#### ***D.4 Set up an information exchange mechanism***

Several options (to be agreed upon by the Task Force members) include:

- an email forum/fora
- formal web-based forum - existing sites could be used, including the SCN website or the FAO-led Global FSN Forum or the FAO Nutrition Division-led D-group on ‘Bridging Food Security and Nutrition Indicators’
- newsletters
- periodic meetings, ad-hoc meetings

#### **E. Immediate steps to be taken during November 2007 – February 2008 in preparation of the 35<sup>th</sup> Session of SCN (Hanoi/Vietnam)**

1. Establish an official list of members on the TF (see attached list of proposed members)
2. Circulate the above mentioned objectives and activities amongst TF members and start a discussion on:
  - other suggested objectives, outputs and activities
  - specific outputs, impacts and outcomes to be achieved by the TF
  - TF’s operational mode and structure
  - inputs (i.e. who will do what, how and in relation to whom)
  - resources (i.e. what is available, what can be mobilized, including staff and funding)

The above process would take the form of a facilitated discussion (by FAO and WFP Co-chairpersons). Outputs would be:

- a 2008-10 work plan and terms-of reference for the TF-AME (by mid December)
  - activity “D1” above: a tentative list of core indicators proposed for review by other agencies (by end January/early February);
  - preliminary identification of broad AME needs among SCN’s WGs and TFs, UNDP & UN specialist agencies and their bilateral partners, World Bank, CGIAR institutions, and relevant interagency initiatives, and initial steps towards addressing these needs in a coordinated manner (by end February 2008);
  - initiate an exchange forum (by end February 2008)
  - proposed 2008-2010 work plan (end Feb 2008)
3. One or more facilitated e-mail lists, teleconferences and perhaps a face-to-face meeting will be required to pursue the process.

**F. Task Force Composition (tentative list of members)**

Chairperson:	FAO	Mark Smulders
Co-Chairperson:	WFP	Agnès Dhur
Members (agreed):	UNICEF	Bruce Cogill
	FAO	Marie-Claude Dop, Cristina Lopriore
	Tufts University	Helen Young
	IRD	Yves Martin-Prevel
	FAO-FSAU/Somalia	Grainne Moloney
	Independent	Judith Appleton
	Independent	Jackie Frize
Country Reps:	Brazil	Janine Coutinho
SCN Secretariat (ex-officio):		Claudine Prudhon

Other suggested institutions/names/candidates:

WHO	Mercedes De Onis
UNICEF	Krishna Belbase
IFAD	tba
SC-UK	Arabella Duffield
IFPRI	Marie Ruel or John Hoddinott
OCHA:	Alexis Hoskins
FEWSNET:	Gary Eilerts
CIDA:	Stephen Saliewicz; Anar Mamdani
DAC:	??
ECHO:	Vitor Serrano?
ALNAP:	??
others??	??