

# Food security

*Currently, about 800 million people in developing countries face chronic malnutrition and 199 million children under the age of five suffer from acute or chronic protein and energy deficiencies. As many as 88 nations fall into the category of low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDC) of which 42 are in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the African National Societies at their 2000 Ouagadougou conference, committed to addressing food security as a priority for the next decade.*

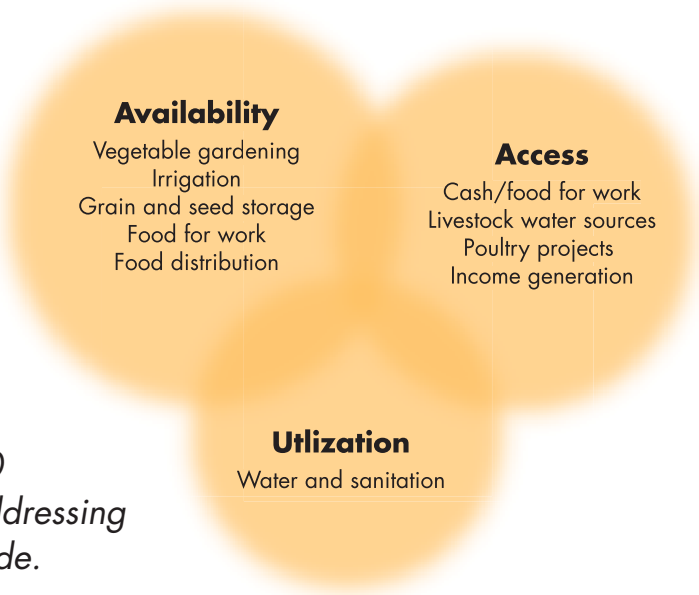
The World Food Summit in 1996 adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action which committed governments “to reduce the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015”. Despite some efforts, current predictions suggest that this target will not be reached.

Food security exists “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life”. Food security programmes span the relief-to-development continuum in assisting the most vulnerable households. They aim to mitigate and reduce risks, and when necessary, they involve provision of relief and recovery assistance from disasters.

Food security programming also specifically considers the needs of chronically ill people such as those living with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis patients. Such households require food security support because production or income-earning opportunities diminish as a result of the ongoing need for care for sick individuals.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent activities in food security

The role of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is best described as holistic, making food accessible and available to vulnerable populations. Our approach ensures optimal utilization of resources based on an analysis of vulnerability to food insecurity and humanitarian needs.



## Examples of food security programmes

- National Societies such as the Ethiopian Red Cross have pioneered work on linking relief and development through cash for work in response to recurrent droughts. The cash replaces food as a relief commodity while the work involves community-based projects such as village road construction and spring water protection.
- In southern Africa, the Swaziland Red Cross is piloting poultry breeding and home gardens as income-generating activities. This pilot project can be replicated throughout the region to address the devastating combination of food insecurity and HIV/AIDS.

## The role of the food security desk within disaster management and coordination division

- To provide **advice** and **information** in order to raise **awareness** on food security issues amongst National Societies, the International Federation secretariat and its field offices.
- To support the development of programmatic interventions that aim to improve the food security of vulnerable people.
- To raise the profile of the International Federation’s work in food security by capturing and disseminating lessons learned.
- To support the development of food security policies and strategies in order to capture and reflect the strength of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.