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Identifying and Managing a Major Shock: Case Study of the Title II Funded Guinea Food Security Initiative

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Objectives: One of the principal objectives of Africare's Title II Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) grant (FY03-FY08) was to examine what role Africare projects have played in famine early warning systems and management of emergency responses to risks and shocks in the intervention areas. This meant taking a look at the utility of Africare's previous investment in organizational capacity of village and district community groups and how this:

- Facilitated early detection of a major shock, monitoring of famine conditions during the food crisis, and emergency food aid distribution; and
- Assisted in managing the response to the shock with project and non-project resources.

This paper provides:

- A brief background review of USAID's emerging concern with better understanding the role of shocks and risk in food security planning;
- An analysis of the role played by the Title II funded Guinea Food Security Initiative (GnFSI) growth monitoring promotion system in the early identification of a major shock that occurred during the life time of the project;
- An analysis of the role of the project in managing the crisis; and
- An assessment of the extent to which the impact of GnFSI's crisis management can be detected through the project's existing monitoring and evaluation indicators, in particular the

MAHFP (Month of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (and the FSCCI (Food Security Community Capacity Index).^{iv}

Background: One of the lessons learned from Title II programming during the 1990s was that the classic three-pronged approach of non-emergency programming (food availability, food access and food utilization) was not sufficient given role of risks and shocks. The new USAID Food for Peace strategy introduces the concept of "risk" and "shocks" into the food aid programming to better address the needs of the most vulnerable food insecure households. It uses the words "shocks" and "risks" almost interchangeably.—although the official "flow-chart" in the strategy refers to shocks primarily in the context of "natural shocks."

Risk was defined as, "an event or circumstance (either isolated or recurrent) that negatively affects the ability of individuals, households, communities, governments, or organizations to create or maintain successful livelihood systems" (McMillan 2006). A shock was defined as, "a more specific type of risk that is not predictable and typically cuts across a wide swath of the population" (McMillan 2006).

Shocks pose a particularly important threat to food security as they can often force households classified as having low vulnerability into the high vulnerability category due to the erosion of assets and mortgaging of assets (e.g. children's education, soil fertility, wood stocks, livestock and personal wealth) that occur as these

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households attempt to survive the shock. Of course households that are classified as vulnerable at the start of a shock are also profoundly and negatively impacted by the shock as they often have far fewer resources to use to survive shocks.

There is little doubt that many of the Title II Food Security programs have substantially increased the capacity of the local communities with which they work to manage routine risk and major shocks. To date, however, there has been almost no analysis of this impact which was outside the original three pronged focus of the Title II program on improving food availability, access, and utilization. A second factor that discouraged Title II programs from reporting on projects' management of shocks is the fact that the emergency assistance was often from another non-project source like the World Food Program. For both of these reasons, the historic impact of the Title II programs on shock management and risk has been under-reported.

Methods: To address this issue, Africare commissioned an intensive case study of risk and shock management on two of its Title II programs that had been operational for almost ten years.

The methodology of the risk studies focused on:

- The elaboration of certain technical forms that permit the reanalysis of existing data at the project level (specifically data on the FSCCI and the MAHFP) and
- The design and pilot testing of new participatory rural appraisal (PRA) forms that communities could use to structure self-evaluation of livelihoods and risk management systems of the most vulnerable groups. These vulnerable groups were identified based on the food security calendars that Africare has used to rank the average MAHFP for the last ten years.

For more information on the methods used for the risk study see McMillan et al. (2006) and for more information on the FSCCI and MAHFP see Africare (2005a and 2005b^v).

GnFSI's Management of Shocks: Between 2001 and 2002 Guinea suffered a series of rebel attacks along its southern border that were related to the long drawn out civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The rebel attacks

caused a major displacement of people towards the center and northern parts of the country that included an official "displaced" population of 4,702 people who settled in Dinguiraye.^{vi}

On average, each Dinguiraye district received 162 displaced persons, which represents an average of 3.6 persons per household with a range of one to 12 persons per household.^{vii} The sudden increase in the size of households resulted in early depletion of scarce food resources stored in granaries. The subsequent famine that ensued explains the deterioration of the nutritional status of certain vulnerable populations and a sudden spike in infant malnutrition.

In response to the detected increase in malnutrition, the GnFSI project expanded the focus of its programs in the most-affected villages by:

- Increasing its dissemination of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) messages on nutrition and food hygiene, with a particular emphasis on the importance of using local food products through cooking and culinary demonstrations;
- Giving priority to villages hardest hit by the crisis for Hearth Model rehabilitation programs of malnourished children; and
- Launching a collaborative vaccination campaign for diseases targeted by the expanded vaccination program (*programme élargi de vaccination* [PEV]) in collaboration with prefectural health services (*Direction préfectorale de la santé* [DPS]).

To supplement its own resources, GnFSI signed collaborative agreements with the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide food aid in project areas. Most of the food was used for Food for Work and Food for Training programs.

A formal letter of agreement was signed between Africare and the WFP to define the following responsibilities for each party.

- The WFP's country office agreed to ensure financial coordination of the activity and the supply of food and non-food equipment (agricultural tools and cooking utensils). It was responsible for all logistical arrangements up to the distribution sites (Table 2).

- Africare agreed to distribute food to displaced populations living in the GnFSI project area in collaboration with the district-level village development committees (VDCs) with which it worked (Table 2).
- The VDCs recorded the number of displaced persons and they served as an intermediary between the communities and development projects by transmit

The WFP delivered significant quantities of food (approximately 382 MT) to Africare and the VDCs through these signed agreements (Table 3). In Africare districts, this food was used to (Table 2):

- Assist community volunteers (VDCs, the Hearth Model mothers, and community-based volunteer midwives);
- Encourage participation of the displaced vulnerable households in market garden groups, agricultural groups in the lowlands most vulnerable to flooding, and literacy training; and
- Assist AIDS orphans from various project intervention sites and the Center for Nutritional Rehabilitation (CNT) in recuperation from severe cases of malnutrition and to support their guardians during their stay in the center.

Reports on the Food for Work and Food for Training activities, in the WFP format, were regularly submitted to the WFP sub-office in Kankan both quarterly and annually.

In addition, Africare collaborated with the WFP's pre-existing program to promote school canteens. The school canteen program was designed to encourage school attendance—especially by girls. Africare's involvement included public awareness building through the Africare VDCs and field agents, identifying the most appropriate schools for this type of assistance, constructing covered areas (hangars), locating warehouses where the food could be stocked, recruiting volunteer mothers to assist with cooking for the canteens, and putting parents' groups in contact with women's groups who might be willing to help grow vegetables to improve the quality of the lunches.

Results:

Role of the Project Growth Monitoring Promotion (GMP) Program. The key signal that



“To supplement its own resources, GnFSI signed collaborative agreements with the World Food Programme to provide food aid in project areas.” (GnFSI archive)

first alerted the GnFSI project and government officials to the food crisis resulting from the influx of refugees was a sudden spike in the percentage of children identified as “malnourished” in the GnFSI growth monitoring program (Table 1): from 21.9 to 29.9 percent in the new Dinguiraye project villages between 2001 and 2002. This data also helped the WFP justify a quick response.

Some of the best evidence of the success of this response is the speed with which the growth monitoring promotion tracking system showed a return to the “normal” levels of malnutrition (see the percentage of underweight children, monitoring indicator 1.2, Table 1). Within one year, the percentage of children in the GMP that were identified as malnourished went from 29.9 percent (in 2002) to 23.4 percent (in 2003), which was only two percent higher than it was in 2001, despite the food crisis in the interim. By 2004, the percentage of children classified as malnourished was at 17.17 percent in the new Dinguiraye districts, which was three percent below the levels recorded before the crisis (Table 1). Had the project not been able to galvanize a coordinated response with help from the WFP, it is highly likely that the observed “improvements” in malnutrition levels would have been delayed by several years.

Role of the MAHFP in Tracking the Shock's Impact on Vulnerability. GnFSI's current system for measuring MAHFP provides a mechanism for tracking the impact of the refugee crisis on average vulnerability at the zonal level. The fact that the percentage of households in the least food secure category did not increase between 2001 and 2004 (which included the peak periods

Table 1. Evolution of Key Indicators for Health and Nutrition Programs in the Projects Affected by Africare's Title II Programs in Guinea, 1997-2005

Year	Number of Beneficiary Districts Included in the Africare-Facilitated Growth Monitoring ^{viii} (x/y x=number of districts where GMP is active, y=number where project is active in that year)				Number of Beneficiary Districts Executing Hearth Model Program (x/y x=number of districts where Hearth Program executed in that year; y=number of district where the project is intervening in that year)				District Development Committee Scores on Support for Nutrition Initiatives (GnFSI Monitoring Indicator 1.5, the FSCCI—SIAC)				% Children Underweight (0-36 months-GnFSI (Monitoring Indicator 1.2) ^{ix}				% Children Stunted (GnFSI Impact Indicator 1.1)			
	Dinguiraye		Dabola		Dinguiraye		Dabola		Dinguiraye		Dabola		Dinguiraye		Dabola		Dinguiraye		Dabola	
	O	N	E	M	O	N	E	M	O%	N%	E%	M%	O	N	E	M	O	N	E	M
1997	8/30	n/a											30.8	n/a			29.7			
1998	16/30	n/a												n/a						
1999	30/30	n/a											25.4	n/a			27.2			
2000	30/30	n/a			8/30								18.6	n/a						
2001	30/30	0/20			17/30				45	n/a			20.7	21.9			21.9	21.4		
2002	30/30	20/20			14/30	10/20			56.1	49.9			19.7	29.9			21.5	23.6		
2003	30/30	20/20			4/30	17/20			66	58			19.7	23.4						
2004	30/30	20/20	11/11	14/14	7/30	9/20	4/11	0/14	70	58.13	6	6.6	12.29	17.17	21.4	21.6			37.9	39.3
2005	30/30	20/20	11/11	14/14	8/50	10/20	5/11	13/14	69.4	68.5	50.1	54.1	10.6	16.4	16.2	20.2				

O: original project district; N: new project district; E: extreme poverty district; M: average poverty district; FSCCI: Food Security Community Capacity Index; SIAC: systèmes d'information à assises communautaire (local community information system);^xGMP: growth monitoring promotion

Table 2 Role of Africare and its Community Structures in Managing Humanitarian Aid

Type/Source of Aid	Year	Role of the WFP	Role of Africare (administration, field agents and community organizations)
Africare Agreements with World Food Programme (WFP)			
a) Food for Work	2003 - 2004	- Coordinate financing of activity - Dispatch food and non-food equipment to the distribution site	- Draft collaboration agreement - Train agents and VDCs on the criteria for distribution - Identify beneficiaries - Raise awareness on methods of proper food use and identify warehouses - Monitor distribution - Draft reports
b) Food for Training			
c) Food for women with undernourished children (INSE)	2003		
Africare support to the pre-existing WFP School Feeding Programs in the Zone	2002 – present	This activity was carried out in collaboration with WFP and Parent and Friends of the School Association (APEAE) with the objective of encouraging schooling of young girls, increasing school attendance, and reducing dropout rates.	- Identify schools - Encourage them to construct simple overhanging shelters (to cover the cooking and dining areas) - Identify warehouses for food storage - Provide link to women’s groups to improve sauce quality - Identify female volunteers to alternate cooking for schools

APEAE: *Association des parents d’élèves et amis de l’école* (Parents and friends of the school association);
 WFP: World Food Programme; INSE: *Institut de nutrition et de la santé des enfants* (Institution for Child Health and Nutrition); VDC: village development committees

of the crisis)—and actually decreased from 58 and 60 percent to 42 and 42 percent for the original and new Dinguiraye districts respectively—was a major accomplishment (Table 4). During an unassisted crisis, the number of people in the most vulnerable category increases. Specifically, these data suggest that the Africare/WFP humanitarian response helped protect the assets of the most vulnerable households at the same time that it enabled them to pursue activities (education, health education, NRM) that improve their long-term living conditions.

Link between Community Capacity to Manage Risk (based on the FSCCI) and Humanitarian Response. Community leaders argue that the active involvement of the VDCs that were created and strengthened under the GnFSI in managing the community level food aid distribution activities (Table 2 above) helped validate the VDCs in the eyes of the government, beneficiaries, and members of the VDCs themselves. The same collaboration created new types of synergy between local institutions. One of the best examples of this is the active collaboration between the village development

committees and the parent-teacher organizations (APEAE) that resulted from Africare’s assistance to the WFP school canteen program.^{xi}

GnFSI’s agricultural and capacity building supervisors argued that there is a direct link between the volume of food aid that came into the villages between 2002 and 2004 and the average FSCCI scores for those years. They also argued that this positive impact would not have been possible had the core capacity of the village development committees not already passed a certain threshold.

It is possible to examine broad trends in food consumption levels (MAHFP), food aid (in total kilograms), beneficiaries, and community capacity levels (FSCCI) (Tables 1, 3, and 4). Unfortunately, due to the fact that the village level response to the crisis was analyzed apart from the wider project since the food assistance was from World Food Program and not Title II. As a result, it is not possible to examine how the FSCCI levels correlated with food aid management capacity and other indicators.

Table 3. Average Number of Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) and the Percentage of Households Classified in the Least Food Secure Category, FY01-FY05

Indicators	Dinguiraye		Dabola	
	Original	New	Extreme Poverty	Average Poverty
Impact Indicator 2.1: # months of adequate household food provisioning (MAHFP)				
FY 2001	4.9	3.8		
FY 2002	n/a	n/a		
FY 2003	5.7	4.8		
FY 2004	6.1	5.9	4.66	n/a
FY 2005	6.4	6.3	4.76	4.82
Impact Indicator 2.2: % of households in the least food secure category (MAHFP)				
FY 2001	58%	60%		
FY 2002	n/a	n/a		
FY 2003	44%	53%		
FY 2004	42%	42%	74%	59%
FY 2005	36%	40%	57%	54%

Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

Recommendation #1 GMP as Early Warning System. The GnFSI growth monitoring promotion activities enabled the GnFSI project and Guinea government authorities to detect worsening nutritional status of children due to the influx of refugees and to take the necessary measures to halt further deterioration and begin to make improvements in nutrition. This is clearly a major contribution of the project to strengthening risk management at the zonal and district level. Clear recommendations for how to sustain this activity once the project ends was made during the final evaluation of GFSI (Adelski et al. 2007). Further actions need to be taken by both Africare and the Guinea government in the near future to strengthen villagers' ability to alert on crisis and shocks (Table 5).

Recommendation #2 Food Assistance and the FSCCI. The project's investment in VDCs strengthened the capacities of these structures to manage risk, including unforeseen risks. The VDC's ability to successfully manage the food crisis shock in turn helped validate the investment in building this core community capacity. Conversely, had the VDCs not been able to galvanize any sort of humanitarian response, this would have weakened their recognition at the local level. More detailed information on the link between food aid management and local food security community structures should be collected in connection with the annual updates of the FSCCI (Table 5). If data exist showing a strong quantitative link between the FSCCI and food aid levels and/or

some proxy variable for food aid distribution efficiency, it would provide a strong argument for linking USAID-funded programs that promote good governance to programs aimed at strengthening local and regional capacity to better manage risks and shocks. In the future when food aid is distributed the location or community groups that distribute it should be noted and recorded so that after the crisis is over the data can be compiled and used to assess the relationship of successful food aid management and other indicators such as FSCCI.

Recommendation #3 Food Assistance and the MAHFP. While it is presumed that the principal beneficiaries of the WFP food assistance were households in the least food secure category, this cannot be shown quantitatively. This is because the current systems for monitoring food aid do not note the food security category of the beneficiary households. This information could be added to the basic forms relatively easily since the same committees administering the food assistance are those that participate in the annual food security calendar exercise (Table 5). For maximum utility, this analysis of patterns of participation by food security category should be linked to the previous chapter's recommendation for strengthening the analysis of the livelihood and coping strategies of the households in the different food security categories.

Recommendation #4 Reporting. Despite the significant role played by the project in food aid distribution, it was not well known or documented outside the routine reports that were prepared and submitted to the World Food Program. Only one paragraph made allusion to

Table 4. Identified Needs, Recommendations and tools for Strengthening Evaluation and Monitoring of Link between GnFSI Project Foci and Crisis Management Using Food Aid

Identified Need	Sub-Recommendation	Period	Tool	Value Added
#1 GMP as an early warning system: Strengthen the demonstrated capacity of community based growth monitoring promotion (GMP) programs that Africare coordinates with the Ministry of Health to serve as early warning systems	Explore ways that the GMP can be maintained and strengthened after the project closes	Annual	Collaborate with health districts in identifying what types of early warning information could be added to routine GMP forms	Increases prospects for sustaining the GMP's role in nutrition education and as an early warning system
#2 Food assistance and the FSCCI: Record better information on the link between food assistance and core capacity development	Create a structured mechanism (to be applied during the annual PRA updates) for measuring different types of food assistance coming into Africare villages through Title II and non-Title II programs	Annual	Annual PRAs in conjunction with the FSCCI	Helps USAID/FFP better justify investment in core capacity building as a strategic objective in Title II programs
#3 Food assistance and the MAHFP: Need for better information on patterns of participation of vulnerable households in direct food distribution programs and the impact of direct distribution on livelihoods	Identify food aid beneficiaries by their food security category as well as by number and name	Annual	Current tools used to track beneficiaries in Food for Work, Food for Training, etc.	Facilitates USAID/FFP and Africare tracking of vulnerable groups' participation in and benefits from direct distribution food aid programs
#4 Reporting: Need for standardized guidance to cooperating sponsors on where they should report on development relief achievements	Suggest places in the current CSR4 guidance and/or annexes that CS's should report on successes in development relief programming	Annual	Africare's "user friendly" guidance and (eventually) USAID/FFP guidance	-Creates a standard mechanism for reporting development relief achievements -Encourages the exchange of best practice between programs

this assistance and the FFW activities in the mid-term evaluation. Even the coordinator's detailed reports on the impact of managing WFP food distribution and the active role played by VDCs in risk management were not disseminated. Africare needs to re-examine its user-friendly CSR4 guidance in order to identify places where programs can report on various ways the capacity built under Title II funding is also supporting developmental relief (Table 5).

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^{iv} See other uses of FSCCI and MAHFP and comparisons of these indicators an other standard indicators in this series including (Tushemerirwe and McMillan 2007; Pogba et al. 2007; Bryson and Cohen 2008; Nanama and Souli 2007; Nanéma et al. 2007).

^v Both the FSCCI guidance and the MAFHP-PRA guidance have been revised (see Africare 2007 [a] and Africare 2007 [b]). The MAHFP-average guidance is currently being revised and will be published in this series upon completion.

^{vi} Sidibé, Sidikiba, 2004. *Impact des vivres de PAM dans les zones d'intervention d'Africare, Dinguiraye: Africare Guinée.*

^{vii} Sidibé, Sidikiba, 2001, *Rapport de l'Enquête de Base, Dinguiraye: Africare-Guinée.* pp. 16 and 73.

^{viii} This is not an official indicator of the project, but is based on project records. Monitoring Indicator 1.1 measures "Percentage of eligible children in growth monitoring weighed in last four months" since 2003.

^{ix} This indicator measures children that score in the "yellow" and "red" zone on the growth chart which tracks acute and chronic according to weight/age criteria. This indicator concerns children aged three to 59 months during the first phase of the project (1997-2000), and 24 to 59 months during the second phase (2001-2006).

^x SIAC includes, but is not limited to growth monitoring. It has been adopted by the Ministry of Health and implemented by all NGOs and Institutions in Guinea, including UNICEF.

^{xi} Africare's training, for example, helped the VDC's understand their role in managing the school canteens run by the parent teacher organizations (APEAE). The APEAE organizations, in turn, prompted students' parents to make contributions towards buying ingredients for the school feeding program. Members of the VDCs themselves connected women's groups with the APEAE, and these women's groups took responsibility for getting fresh supplies of ingredients from their gardens (leaves, tomatoes, onions, eggplants, okra) for the canteen. In collaboration with the community, the VDCs also involved the village women in cooking on an alternate basis for the canteens.