

# Food Security Information for Action

## Reporting Food Security Information

### Lesson 4

# Reporting Formats for Food Security

## Learner Notes



This course is funded by the European Union and implemented  
by the Food and Agriculture Organization.



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## Learning objectives

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At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the major report types used to present food security information;
- understand the key features of these alternative report types; and
- structure a food security report for various contexts and purposes.

## Introduction

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In this lesson we will look at how to structure reports for the major contexts that you may be asked to report in. You can draw on the examples and ideas presented in this lesson in developing your own reports. But remember that the context and purpose that you are writing for will be complex and unique.

Each report should be tailored to the needs of the primary audience: you will need to apply your own creative talents in developing your final report.

## Reporting formats used in various food security contexts

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Let's quickly review the main steps that you should follow to plan a report:

1. Defining the purpose for your report
  2. Identifying the readers
  3. Addressing a significant problem and answering the right questions
  4. Providing readers with actionable recommendations
- = REPORT OUTLINE

Once these steps have been completed, you can develop an outline of the report.

At that point you should already have ideas of what the report will need to contain. But exactly what format will you use? What sections or elements should it include? What will it look like? In short, what **type of report** will you produce?

We will now have a look at some of the major types of reports.

### 1. Research Reports

You may need to report on a piece of research that you have conducted on food security in your country or region; for example a baseline report or a study on vulnerability.

This type of report primarily presents and records your findings which may be used for **purposes that you can not fully predict.**

While preliminary recommendations may be made, especially on longer term food security interventions, the emphasis is on increasing understanding of the issue through analysis.

## 2. Early Warning Bulletins

Early warning is about providing a glimpse of the future.

These reports provide decision makers with an indication of **whether a food security problem is emerging**. It should show where and how quickly it is developing and the dimensions of the problem. It may recommend further in-depth assessments or immediate interventions.

## 3. Needs Assessment Reports

Emergency Needs Assessments provide governments, relief organisations and the wider international community with **information to plan an immediate response** in the aftermath of a crisis. They establish the extent of a humanitarian emergency and the right response to reduce its impact.

Needs Assessments reports communicate these findings and recommendations to programmers and planners.

## 4. Policy Papers or Briefs

Food security information and analysis is required to inform the **development of relevant policies**.

Policy papers or briefs start from a stated need or problem, provide a selection of choices and recommends adopting one, some, or none of the options presented. For example, you may have been asked to examine policy options for establishing a national safety net.

The paper answers the question "**Which option(s) should we choose?**" and supports the recommendations with comprehensive information and persuasive arguments.

## 5. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Reports

M&E is a process of assessing an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy.

M&E assesses the design, implementation and results. A monitoring report checks progress and recommends remedial actions. An evaluation report looks at the impact and recommends whether to continue, modify or stop the project, programme or policy.

## Selecting the best report type

The table below may help you to think about which is the most suitable report format to apply to a specific situation.

Report Type	Frequency	Primary purposes
<b>Baseline or Research Report</b>	Infrequent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates an increased understanding of food security</li> <li>• Contributes to long-term development planning</li> </ul>
<b>Early Warning Bulletin</b>	Continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informs decision makers of current levels and trends in food security</li> <li>• Activates and focuses needs assessment and mitigation plans</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency Needs Assessment</b>	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies the extent and impact of a humanitarian emergency</li> <li>• Recommends an appropriate emergency response</li> <li>• Mobilizes resources</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Papers or Briefs</b>	Infrequent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines an urgent policy issue</li> <li>• Identifies and evaluates policy options</li> <li>• Recommends a preferred alternative</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Reports (Programs and Policies)</b>	Continuous (monitoring) Periodic (evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assesses progress against targets</li> <li>• Recommends changes to activities and design</li> <li>• Mobilizes resources</li> </ul>

Table I: Summary of Report Types

In the real-world, the different **report types often combine**.

For example, you might see elements of policy recommendation combined with a research report; or an early warning bulletin that incorporates recommendations on emergency needs.

Remember that there are many other documents that you may be responsible for. However, we will concentrate on reporting food security information.

Now we will see how to **define the outline** of each type of report. For each report type, you will know what elements should be included, and analyze some examples.

## Formats for Research Reports

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In the course of your work you may undertake 'research' in order to better understand the nature of food security in a country or region. For example you might want to understand:

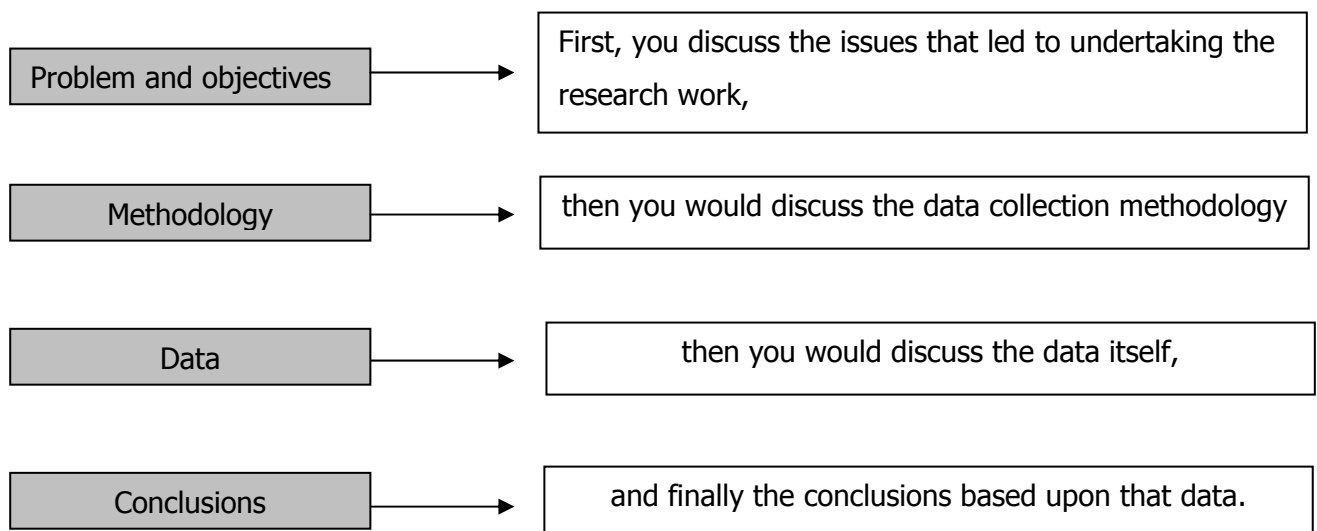
- What are the basic livelihoods of groups?
- What are known or likely hazards that they might face?
- What is the likelihood of these occurring?
- Who are the most vulnerable groups?
- What are the available coping and risk minimization strategies?
- What capacities, services and resources exist to mitigate vulnerability?

Your research may be based on field work (primary sources) or analysing previous surveys, other published research or talking to people (secondary sources).

The report presents your data and draws conclusions from it. It provides information in a way that is adapted for a particular audience that has specific needs for that information.

This type of report may not provide systematic recommendations. While preliminary recommendations may be included, the emphasis is on analysis and **contributing to an increased understanding** of the issue.

The typical research report would loosely follow the same **chronological order** as your research:



The length of each section may vary greatly between different reports. Section headings may be combined, separated or renamed according to the purpose of the report.

Let's have a look at these sections more in detail. Research type papers commonly include the following structural elements:

<b>Title</b>	<p>The title is the first thing that readers will see. A well chosen title should give readers a quick overview of the subject and problem addressed in the report. A reader may use the title in deciding whether to read the full report or not.</p>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<p>The table of contents is a skeleton or overview of the structure of the report. It shows the overall organization, the main sections and their sub-sections and page numbers to locate sections in the report.</p> <p>The table of contents leads readers through the whole report. It provides a quick overview of the focus and major issues addressed.</p> <p>The table of contents also helps readers to find specific sections or information that they are particularly interested in.</p>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<p>The executive summary represents the whole report by providing a synopsis of all the main parts and findings.</p> <p>The executive summary aims to interest readers in reading the whole report.</p> <p>However, the main function of the executive summary is to satisfy the needs of those readers who do not have time to read the entire report and readers whose main interest is in the findings and conclusions of the study; especially decision-makers.</p>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The introduction to the research report also needs to get the readers ready to read the full report.</p> <p>Some of the other elements, such as the background or the purpose, can be handled in the introduction.</p>



	<p>However, if these issues require a lot of discussion they may need their own sections.</p> <p>The introduction may conclude with a road map, showing how the report is organized.</p>
<b>Background and purpose</b>	<p>You will need to discuss the situation that led to the research. What is the problem that the research set out to address?</p> <p>You will need to discuss what you intended to do in the research project. What were your objectives? What was the scope of your work? What was not included?</p>
<b>Review of the literature</b>	<p>It is usual in a research report to summarize any relevant research to the study. What other reports or studies have been written about the issue?</p> <p>You should summarize this literature briefly. You should provide the full bibliographic citations at the end of your report so that readers can find these documents if they want to.</p>
<b>Method and procedures</b>	<p>One of the goals in writing this type of report is to allow the reader to visualize how you collected the data, so that they can judge the reliability or limits to the data.</p> <p>You may even want to enable the reader to replicate the survey. You should describe the conceptual framework of your research. You should also discuss the practical procedures used, possibly in some detail.</p>
<b>Presentation of the data</b>	<p>The heart of the research report is the data. These can go in the body of your report, or alternatively as appendixes if the data would interrupt the flow of your discussion.</p> <p>Future readers may want to utilize the original data in ways that you can not always anticipate.</p> <p>In this section you would not add interpretation to the presentation of</p>

	<p>data. You merely present the data, without trying to explain it.</p>
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<p>In a research report, it is useful to interpret or discuss your findings in a section separate from the one where you present the data.</p> <p>This section would explain your data and interpret it.</p> <p>This section, or area of the report, is also the place to make preliminary recommendations or state ideas for further research.</p>
<b>Appendices</b>	<p>Appendices can be useful for presenting the detailed data or additional information, where including it in the text would interrupt the flow of the main discussion.</p> <p>For example you may place a detailed methodology as an appendix.</p>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<p>The purpose of a research report is to build upon or add to the knowledge in a particular area.</p> <p>Your research report builds on the work done by other researchers on the same topic.</p> <p>For that reason, you must list the sources of information you used or consulted in your project.</p>

Now, let's examine the different features of two kinds of report:

### 1. Background reports

As part of developing a PRSP you may be asked to help prepare a **vulnerability and poverty analysis**. This report is used to increase understanding of local livelihoods, existing conditions, and capacities for dealing with risk.

As a food security analyst you will have an intimate understanding of these issues and may be asked to help research and write such a report. This background report is the starting point to develop the PRSP.

## 2. Baseline reports

An FSIS may undertake a **baseline survey**.

A baseline report is used to present findings from this survey. A major function is to serve as a reference point for future assessments. You may want to be able to assess whether the food security situation has gotten better or worse, perhaps due to an external shock.

Or maybe you need to capture the baseline to assess the evidence of impacts from implementing a policy, programme or project.

As **examples of research type reports**, you may look at a baseline report written for Djibouti and a food security situation report prepared for Georgia. Remember that these examples are provided to illustrate certain points – not necessarily to serve as templates for you to use. You don't need to read these reports in detail.<sup>1</sup>

As you develop your research paper you should also consider a series of questions. The most important one is:

**Does your research report achieve its purpose and communicate an increased understanding of the topic that you have investigated to the target audience?**

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<sup>1</sup> Please look at the Annexes "Djibouti Profile & Baseline.pdf" and "Georgia FS Brief Issue20.pdf"

*Checklist*

Additional questions include:

- Is the title interesting, clear, succinct and descriptive?
- Are headings of sections and sub-sections chosen effectively, and do they provide a clear overview of your paper?
- Is the executive summary a good representation of the paper?
- Are the objectives and scope of your research clearly explained?
- Are the methods and procedures clearly described? Could the reader replicate your survey?
- Have any previous studies on the issue been summarized?
- Are the original data clearly presented to the user?
- Are your findings and conclusions clearly written?
- Are recommendations practical in nature? Are they easily identifiable in the text?
- Are all appendices relevant and appropriate in supporting the paper?

Then, you should check the following elements of your report:

- title
- headings
- executive summary
- objectives
- description of methods and procedures
- summary of previous studies
- presentation of original data
- findings and conclusions
- recommendations
- appendices

## Formats for Early Warning Bulletins

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An important function of most food security information systems is to provide early warning of an impending food security crisis.

Over the past two decades relatively elaborate Early Warning (EW) systems have been established in many Countries.

The critical questions that an early warning bulletin needs to answer include:

- Is there a problem emerging?
- What areas are affected and how quickly is the problem developing?
- What response is already underway?
- Are more in-depth assessments needed?

The EW bulletin will need to keep key decision makers informed of the situation.

The primary audience will include staff of national Governments, donors and other humanitarian agencies.

Depending on the situation the report may be used to stimulate further action. However, an EW bulletin would not normally be expected to support detailed programming decisions.

An early warning bulletin may include the following structural elements:

<b>Title</b>	<p>The title can be used to communicate the main message of the bulletin. A one line title can provide a mini summary of the report. This can be very helpful to busy decision makers who need to know at a glance whether there is a problem that needs their attention or not.</p>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<p>Even though EW bulletins are usually very short – between one and four pages in length – a table of contents can still be appropriate. The table of contents is a skeleton or overview of the structure of the report.</p>

	<p>It provides readers with a quick overview of the focus and major issues addressed.</p> <p>It helps readers to locate specific information that they may be particularly interested in.</p>
<p><b>Summary</b></p>	<p>The summary provides a synopsis of the whole bulletin.</p> <p>It may be the only part of the report that is read by busy decision makers, so it needs to represent all the key findings and recommendations of the report.</p> <p>It should be tightly drafted, short and focus on the main analytical points and recommendations.</p>
<p><b>Implications and recommendations</b></p>	<p>The section summarizes the current problem; what is the intensity, extent and duration of the problem and who is affected?</p> <p>This section provides recommendations for immediate response - practical steps that need to be implemented in the short term. As the bulletin may be reporting on a situation which is evolving quickly and/or where the data is incomplete, recommendations may include collecting further data.</p> <p>In contrast to many of the other report formats it is more common to find the recommendations presented close to the front of the bulletin. This serves to focus attention on urgently needed emergency actions.</p>
<p><b>Problem description</b></p>	<p>The problem description identifies the nature of the shock or crisis. The current status of the problem may be discussed in detail, including: impacts on food production; markets and access to food; and health and nutritional consequences.</p> <p>It would identify who has been affected and in what way. Impacts on infrastructure and institutions should be discussed – particularly as they affect the ability to respond to the crisis. Lastly it would look at what is already being done to respond to the problem and what is planned in the near future.</p>

As examples of early warning bulletins, you may look at the Annexes provided.<sup>2</sup> One bulletin was prepared for Somalia and one report from Kenya. Remember that these examples are provided to illustrate certain points and stimulate ideas – not necessarily to serve as templates for your use.

As you develop your research paper you should also consider a series of questions.

The following is the most important one:

**Does your bulletin achieve its purpose of informing decision makers of current levels and trends in food security?**

Additional questions include:

*Checklist*

- Does the title provide an effective one line summary of the bulletin?
- Is a short table of contents appropriate? If so, does this provide a clear overview to your paper?
- Is the summary a good representation of the main points included in the report?
- Are recommendations clearly written and practical in nature? Are they easily identifiable in the text?
- Is the problem (including the impacts) clearly and convincingly defined?
- If appropriate, does your problem description convince the readers that an urgent problem exists?

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<sup>2</sup> Please look at the Annexes "FSAU December report.pdf", "Kenya FEWS Bulletin.pdf"

Then, you should check the following elements of your report:

- title
- table of contents
- summary
- recommendations
- problem description



## Formats for Needs Assessment Reports

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An emerging food security problem may trigger a needs assessment exercise to establish the extent and the right response to the emergency.

The needs assessment should answer the following crucial questions:

- What is nature and dimensions of the problem?
- How long is it going to last?
- Who are the most vulnerable groups?
- What and how much is needed; what is the best response?
- To what extent is local coping capacity and provision of services overwhelmed?
- What are major logistical and resource considerations?

The assessment report will need to communicate these findings to a primary audience that includes planners and managers in government departments, donors and other humanitarian agencies.

The report may be used to support decision making on both programming, resource mobilization and advocacy.

Needs Assessments would usually include the following structural elements:

<b>Title</b>	<p>The title is important as it is the first part of the report read by the reader. A reader may use the title in deciding whether to read the report or not.</p> <p>At a minimum the title should clearly indicate the topic (a needs assessment) the geographical location and period. It may also be used to start to communicate your main message.</p>
	<p>The table of contents is a skeleton or overview of the structure of the report. It shows the overall organization, the main sections and their sub-</p>

<p><b>Table of contents</b></p>	<p>sections and page numbers to locate specific sections.</p> <p>The table of contents leads readers through the whole report. It provides readers with a quick overview of the focus and major issues addressed.</p>
<p><b>Executive Summary</b></p>	<p>The executive summary represents the whole paper by providing a synopsis of the main findings and recommendations.</p> <p>The executive summary aims to interest readers in reading the whole report.</p> <p>However, the main function of the executive summary is to satisfy the needs of those readers who do not have time to read the entire report and readers whose main interest is in the findings and recommendations of the study; especially decision-makers.</p>
<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<p>The introduction to the needs assessment report prepares the readers for the full report.</p> <p>Other elements such as the methodology, background and purpose, can be handled in the introduction.</p> <p>However if these issues require a lot of discussion they may need their own sections. The introduction may conclude with a road map, showing how the paper is organized.</p>
<p><b>Objectives and methodology</b></p>	<p>You will need to discuss what you intended to do in the needs assessment. What were your objectives? What is the scope of the study?</p> <p>This section should briefly outline the methods that were used. How was the primary data sampled and collected; and what secondary data sources were used? How was the data analyzed? This section should indicate the level of confidence in the data and consequent conclusions.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<p>To set the context for the recommended response, the report should discuss the background and pre-crisis conditions in the affected areas.</p> <p>This would summarize the livelihoods (including the economic, social and</p>

	<p>political dimensions) and their vulnerabilities and capacities.</p>
<p><b>Problem description</b></p>	<p>The problem description identifies the nature of the shock or crisis. This may include the history of the problem: its causes; and similar events in the past.</p> <p>The current status of the problem may be discussed in detail, including: impacts on food production; markets and access to food; and health and nutritional consequences. It would identify who has been affected and in what way. Impacts on infrastructure and institutions should be discussed – particularly as they affect the ability to respond to the crisis.</p> <p>Lastly, it would look at what is already being done to respond to the problem and how successful these efforts have been.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions and recommendations</b></p>	<p>This section provides a concise <i>synthesis</i> of the major findings - this is more than a <i>summary</i>. It presents a clear case to the decision makers and provides a call to action.</p> <p>The section summarizes the current situation; possible scenarios of how the problem may evolve and the number, level and duration of assistance required. This section outlines, evaluates and compares the possible response alternatives. Finally the reader is provided with recommendations for response - practical steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed policy option.</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p>	<p>Appendices can be useful for presenting the detailed data or additional information, where including it in the text would interrupt the flow of the main discussion.</p> <p>For example this may include maps, details of methodologies and background information on livelihoods.</p>

If you wish to look at two examples of needs assessment reports, you may read the Annexes provided.<sup>3</sup> One example is the Vulnerability Assessment Report from Malawi and the second is a WFP needs assessment update for Sri Lanka.

Remember that these examples are provided to illustrate certain points and stimulate ideas – not necessarily to serve as templates for your use.

Quickly skim through these reports. Look through the contents and structure and compare this to the usual elements identified in the previous page. How does it vary?

As you develop your needs assessment report you should also consider a series of questions. The following is the most important one:

**Does your paper achieve its purpose of presenting clear recommendations on the appropriate response(s) to the current crisis?**

Other questions include:

*Checklist*

- Is the executive summary a good representation of the paper?
- Is the problem (including the impacts) clearly and convincingly defined? Are the immediate and underlying causes of the problem identified?
- If appropriate, does the problem description convince the readers that an urgent problem exists?
- Are the possible response alternatives presented and evaluated?
- Is the basis on which you evaluated each option, i.e. the framework of analysis, clearly outlined?
- Do you demonstrate that your chosen response alternative represents the best solution to the problem?
- Are recommendations clearly written and practical in nature? Are they easily identifiable in the text?
- Are all appendices relevant and appropriate in supporting the paper?

<sup>3</sup> Please look at the Annexes "Malawi VAC Report.pdf" and "Sri Lanka ENA.pdf "

Then, you should check the following elements of your report:

- title
- headings
- problem description
- table of Contents
- response alternatives
- framework of analysis
- conclusions and recommendations
- appendices

## Formats for Policy Papers or Briefs

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The idea of contributing to policy making can be intimidating – especially if this is not something that you have been asked to do before. In practice it is a straightforward process.

Policy making can be understood as a process of identifying real world problems, formulating solutions and a course of action to follow:

1. Identifying problems
2. Formulating solutions
3. Implementing actions

Policies may be established by any institution or agency. Public policy, which is determined and implemented by Government, is central to food security.

Policy is usually not a single decision, action or reaction but an elaborated approach or strategy. The policy may be implemented by a single government representative or body or by multiple actors.

If you want to influence policy, or have been invited to do so, then you should consider preparing a policy paper or brief.

A policy paper is a decision-making tool. The aim of the report is not to gather and analyze data about a policy problem (i.e. research), but to develop a set of recommendations for action.

The policy paper should provide a comprehensive and persuasive argument justifying the policy recommendations presented in the paper, and therefore act as a call to action for the target audience. Achieving this purpose usually involves:

1. Defining an urgent policy issue which needs to be addressed.
2. Outlining the possible ways (policy alternatives) in which this issue can be addressed.
3. Evaluating the probable outcomes of these potential options.
4. Recommending a preferred alternative (policy recommendation) and providing a strong argument to establish why your choice is the best possible option.

Let's now have a look at the elements of a policy paper:

<b>Title</b>	<p>The title is the first part of a paper readers see and it begins the process of communicating the message contained in the policy paper.</p> <p>An effective title of a paper should give readers a quick overview of the subject and problem addressed in the policy paper. A reader may use the title in deciding whether to read the paper or not.</p>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<p>The table of contents is a skeleton or overview of the structure of the policy paper. It shows the overall organization, the main sections and their sub-sections and page numbers to locate sections in the paper.</p> <p>The table of contents leads readers through the whole paper. It provides readers with a quick overview of the focus and major issues addressed in the paper. The table of contents helps readers to find specific sections or information that they are particularly interested in.</p>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<p>The executive summary aims to interest readers in reading the whole paper.</p> <p>However, the main function of the executive summary is to satisfy the needs of those readers who will not read the entire paper and readers whose main interest is in the outcomes of the study findings and proposed policy recommendations, especially decision-makers.</p> <p>The executive summary represents the whole paper by providing a synopsis of all main parts and findings.</p>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The introduction sets the scene by presenting the context for the policy problem and linking this to the specific focus of the policy paper.</p> <p>The introduction demonstrates that an urgent problem exists and that your paper is worth reading because it will offer possible solutions to the problem. The introduction will include a statement on the purpose of the policy paper and a brief overview of the methodology used.</p> <p>The introduction may conclude with a road map, showing how the paper is organized.</p>
<b>Problem Description</b>	<p>The problem description identifies, defines and elaborates the nature of the problem being discussed.</p> <p>This may include the background of the problem (the history of the problem: its causes; who is affected; past policies and their outcomes) and the current status of problem (the current extent and impact of the problem, who is affected, the current policy and its successes and failures).</p>
<b>Policy Options</b>	<p>This section outlines, evaluates and compares the possible policy alternatives. All possible policy options should be presented to build a comprehensive and convincing case.</p> <p>The focus is on evaluating how each option compares in solving the specific problem. On the basis of this evidence an argument is made for the preferred policy alternative.</p>
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<p>This section clearly presents the case to decision makers and provides a call to action. This section provides a concise synthesis of the major findings.</p>



	<p>This is more than a summary of the main findings, but highlights links with the main policy recommendations that follow.</p> <p>Finally the reader is provided with a set of policy recommendations - practical steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed policy option.</p>
<b>Appendices</b>	<p>Many policy papers do not contain appendices. However, they can be useful for presenting additional information which supports the main arguments, especially when including detailed information would interrupt the flow of the main discussion.</p> <p>Appendices may present the data and methodology collected and used.</p>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<p>A bibliography provides a list of the sources that you used to develop your argument. Readers may want to refer to these references. It provides them with a comprehensive guide to the current literature on the topic which they may use in their own work.</p>

The exact format and structure of the policy paper or brief will need to be adapted to the purpose and primary audience.

For example, if you are **working for government** you may be asked to help develop public policy by carrying out an in-depth study and make policy recommendations.

In this case, a **relatively formal policy paper** may be most suitable for reaching policy makers.

Alternatively, you may be a **stakeholder outside of government** looking to influence the policy debate on a particular issue. As part of an advocacy strategy you might want to target a broader audience through the media. A report suitable for uptake by the media might contain the same main message, but in a **simplified form**.

To see examples, you may look at a couple of policy papers provided as Annexes <sup>4</sup>.  
The first one was produced by an academic, the other one by an NGO.  
Please scan through the documents, paying particular attention to the structure.

As you develop a policy paper or brief you should consider a series of questions. The following is the most important one:

**Does your paper achieve its purpose of presenting an effective argument, to the primary audience, for your preferred policy option?**

Additional questions include:

*Checklist*

- Is the title interesting, clear, succinct and descriptive?
- Are headings of sections and sub-sections chosen effectively, and do they provide a clear overview to your paper?
- Is the executive summary a good representation of the paper?
- Is the policy problem clearly and convincingly defined?
- Does your problem description convince the readers that an urgent problem exists?
- Are all possible policy alternatives presented and evaluated?
- Is the basis on which you evaluated each option – the framework of analysis – clearly outlined?
- Do you demonstrate that your chosen alternative represents the best solution to the policy problem?
- Do you outline a course of action to solve the policy problem?
- Are recommendations clearly written and practical in nature? Are they easily identifiable in the text?
- Are all appendices relevant and appropriate in supporting the paper?

<sup>4</sup> Please look at the Annexes "ODI Social Protection Policy Paper.pdf" and "Oxfam cash distributions.pdf"

Then, you should check the following elements of your report:

- title
- headings
- executive summary
- presentation of the policy problem and alternatives
- framework of analysis
- conclusions and recommendations
- appendices

## Formats for monitoring and evaluation

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### 1. Monitoring

During the implementation of programmes and projects managers must **keep track of progress**. Managers need to monitor expenditure, resource use and the implementation of activities. Monitoring reports continuously provide information to support internal decision making to fine-tune activities. For example, a monitoring system might tell you how the delivery of food aid compares to the original plan.

### 2. Evaluation

In contrast, evaluations assess the worth of the project or programme. It will examine the impact and results, for instance:

Have the objectives been fulfilled?

Was the intervention efficient and sustainable?

Did the food distributions lead to improved food security?

What lessons can be learned in designing future projects and programmes?

Just like programmes and projects, the **strategies and policies** themselves need to be continuously planned, reviewed, modified and re-planned.

Even if there may be dedicated M&E units responsible for supporting the implementation of specific programmes or policies, your food security information systems may be asked to assist in supporting these processes.

The policies, programmes and projects you are reporting on will usually have some type of **design/planning framework**. This framework provides the basis for the assessment exercise. It will usually specify what was intended to be done - the activities, the results of these activities and the objectives. During the planning exercise it may even be decided how to measure the results – what indicators to use and where to collect the data. The most common planning framework is the *logical framework*.

An M&E process will report on what happened and how this compared to what was intended. On the basis of this analysis, **recommendations** will be made. For example, an evaluation might recommend continuing, modifying it or stopping an intervention.

For monitoring reports the primary audience will be the internal managers and donors. Evaluation reports may target a broader number of external decision makers.

M&E reports commonly include the following structural elements:

<b>Title</b>	<p>A reader sees the title first. They may use it to decide whether to continue reading the paper. A well chosen title gives readers a quick overview of the subject of the report and encourages them to look further at the report.</p>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<p>The table of contents is a skeleton or overview of the structure of the paper. It shows the overall organization, the main sections and their sub-sections and page numbers to locate sections in the paper.</p> <p>The table of contents leads readers through the whole report. It provides a quick overview of the focus and major issues addressed. The table of contents helps readers to find specific sections or information that they are particularly interested in.</p>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<p>The main function of the executive summary is to satisfy the needs of those readers who will not read the entire paper and readers whose main interest is in the conclusions and recommendations, especially decision-makers.</p> <p>It should be tightly drafted, and usable as a free-standing document. It should be short and focus on the main analytical points, indicate the main conclusions, lessons learned and specific recommendations.</p>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The introduction will describe the project, programme or policy to be monitored or evaluated. It will discuss the study objectives and the methodology used. The introduction may conclude with a road map, showing how the paper is organized.</p>
<b>Findings</b>	<p>The core section of the report will examine the performance of the policy, programme or project against its design criteria. This section should describe the facts and interpret or analyse them.</p>
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<p>The key points of the conclusions will vary in nature but will often cover aspects of the evaluation criteria. The ultimate value of an evaluation depends on the quality and credibility of the recommendations offered. Recommendations should therefore be as realistic, operational and pragmatic as possible. Recommendations should be carefully targeted to the appropriate audiences at all levels.</p>
<b>Appendices</b>	<p>Appendices should be used to present additional information which might otherwise interrupt the flow of the main discussion.</p> <p>This may include; terms of reference, methodology, planning documents (eg., logical framework matrices original and improved/updated), map of project area, list of persons/organisations consulted and literature and documentation consulted.</p>

While all these elements should be included in the report, the headings may vary. Some sections may be combined, or expanded and subdivided.

As the audience of monitoring reports is familiar with the activity under discussion, the report may not require much introduction and may compress many of the elements.

The **Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Monitoring Report** is an important example of a monitoring report that a FSIS might contribute to. In September 2000, world leaders adopted a set of development goals – the “Millennium Development Goals” or “MDGs”. The first of these is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger - a topic of particular relevance to FSIS.

Each goal has a quantitative target to be achieved by the year 2015, and appropriate indicators have been selected to monitor progress. Every developing Country has agreed to produce a MDG monitoring report by the end of 2005.

Look at the Global report and at the MDG report provided as Annexes <sup>5</sup>. Scan through the reports, looking in particular at the overall structure, and the first MDG to half poverty and hunger.

As you develop a monitoring or evaluation report you should also consider a series of questions. The following is the most important one:

**Does your report achieve its purpose of summarizing progress and providing recommended actions?**

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<sup>5</sup> Please look at the Annexes “UN MDG Report 2005.pdf” and “6563-pal\_MDG\_Progress\_Report\_2005.pdf”

Additional questions include:

*Checklist*

- Is the title interesting, clear, succinct and descriptive?
- Are headings of sections and sub-sections chosen effectively, and do they provide a clear overview of your paper?
- Is the executive summary a good representation of the report?
- Do you clearly state what the policy/programme/project sets out to do?
- Is the framework of analysis clearly outlined? What criteria are used in assessing progress?
- Are your conclusions supported by your findings?
- Are recommendations clearly written and practical in nature? Are they easily identifiable in the text?
- Is there a recommendation to match each conclusion?
- Are all appendices relevant and appropriate in supporting the paper?

Then, you should check the following elements of your report:

- title
- headings
- executive summary
- the description of what the policy/program/project set out to do
- framework of analysis
- conclusions and recommendations
- appendices



## Further readings

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- Maxwell, D and Watkins, B. (2003), Humanitarian information systems and emergencies in the Greater Horn of Africa: logical components and logical linkages. *Disasters* March 2003, 27(1):72-90.
- Online Technical Guidance on Writing Technical Reports.  
<http://www.io.com/~hcxres/textbook/>
- WFP (2005) Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook. Methodological Guidance for Better Assessments. First Edition, June 2005.
- Young, Eyin and Lisa Quinn (2002) 'Writing Effective Public Policy Papers: A Guide to Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe', LGI Documents  
[http://lgi.osi.hu/publications\\_datasheet.php?id=112](http://lgi.osi.hu/publications_datasheet.php?id=112)
- Country Reporting on the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations Development Group, First Guidance Note, October 2001  
<http://www.undg.org/documents/2356-English.doc>
- Chopak, C. 2000. Early Warning Primer: An Overview of Monitoring and Reporting, Charles Chopak. USAID FEWS Project.  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/LHON-5TVF55?OpenDocument>