

# Towards a Food Security Policy for Timor-Leste

by  
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# The Right to Food

Adequate nutrition belongs to the basic human rights which have been proclaimed by the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” of the United Nations in 1948.

Right to food reconfirmed by:

- World Food Summit (1996 and following)
- Voluntary Guidelines for the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food (2005)

# Why is food insecurity a problem?

**Food insecurity** leads to  
**HUNGER and MALNUTRITION**

**HUNGER and MALNUTRITION:**

- are a violation of the human right to food.
- lead to morbidity and mortality.
- impede human capacity development.
- lead to constrained economic development.
- cause social and political unrest.
- further aggravate poverty.

# Food (In-)Security in Timor-Leste – Main Features and Trends

- At individual level: Malnutrition

## Nutrition status:\*

- Wasting: 12 – 18 %
- Stunting: 44 - 58 %
- Underweight 43 - 65 %

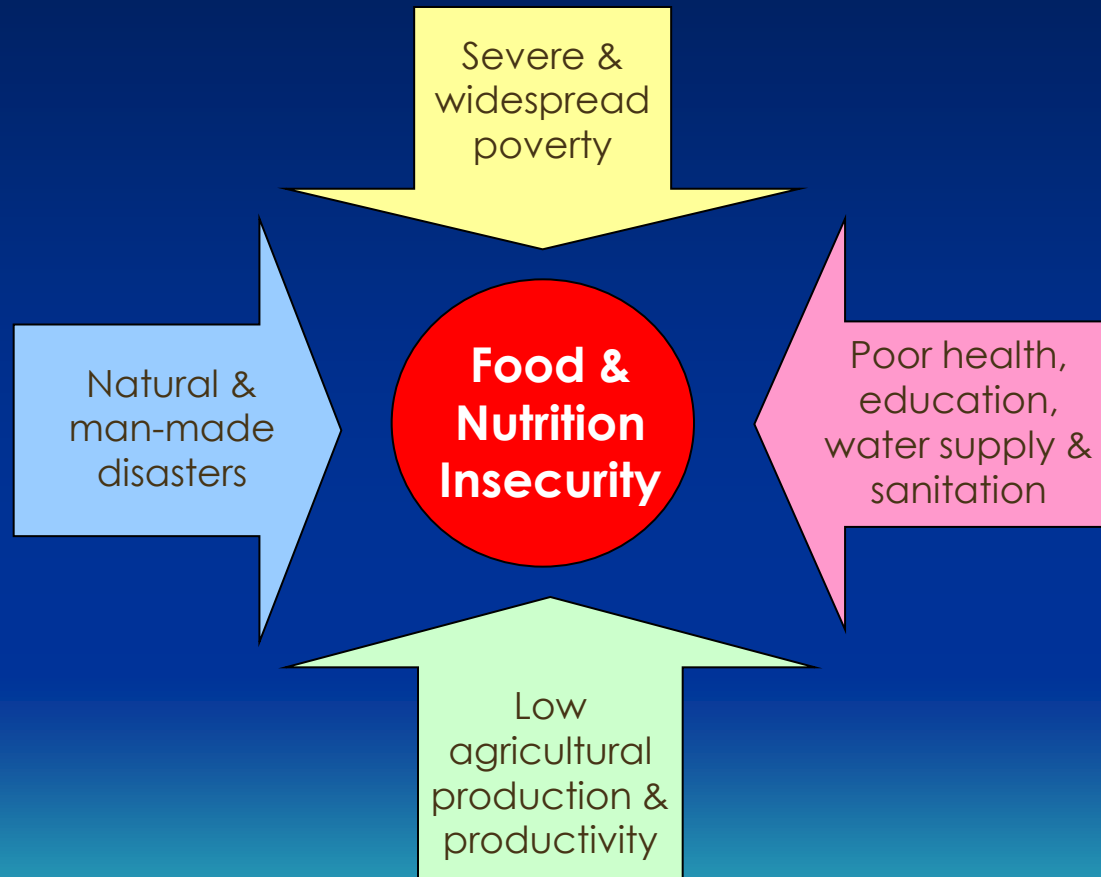
\* Children under 5 years, results of different nutrition surveys  
(Care, GTZ, Oxfam, UNICEF)



# Further aspects of food insecurity

- **Poverty and food insecurity:**  
41% of population live below national poverty line, vulnerable to food insecurity.
- Insufficient food production at national and household level
- Seasonal shortages (“hungry season”)
- Food security threats in the wake of natural disasters (drought, flood, storm).

# Factors causing and aggravating FOOD & NUTRITION INSECURITY



# Why a Food Security Policy for Timor-Leste?

- **High priority** accorded to food security in national development policies and plans
- **Existing problems** of poverty and food insecurity need to be addressed
- To **provide a framework** for programmes with food security objectives, ensuring consistency, bringing about synergies, filling gaps and avoiding duplication.
- To respond to the specific **food security challenges** arising from the long period of occupation and in building up a market economy.



# Food Security Goals & Targets

- **Halve the number of poor and undernourished population by the year 2015.**

(World Food Summit 1996,  
Millennium Goal No. 1, adopted by NDP)

- **Transform the subsistence economy into a market economy; achieve food security; and protect the environment**

(NDP Development Goal b)

- **Provide or help to provide ....protection from unforeseen shocks and disaster (vulnerability), including food security at both the household and national levels.**

(Poverty Reduction Strategy, NDP)



# Food Security Objective

**All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food according to their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.**

(World Food Summit 1996)

# Conditions for Food Security

- Adequate **ACCESS** to food
- Sufficient **AVAILABILITY** of food
- **STABILITY** of access and supplies
- Effective **UTILISATION**

A state of **food security** requires that **all four conditions** are met at the same time.

# Food Insecurity

exists if only **one** of the conditions is not fulfilled.

*What is the situation in Timor-Leste?*

Distinguish:

Food (In-) security at different levels

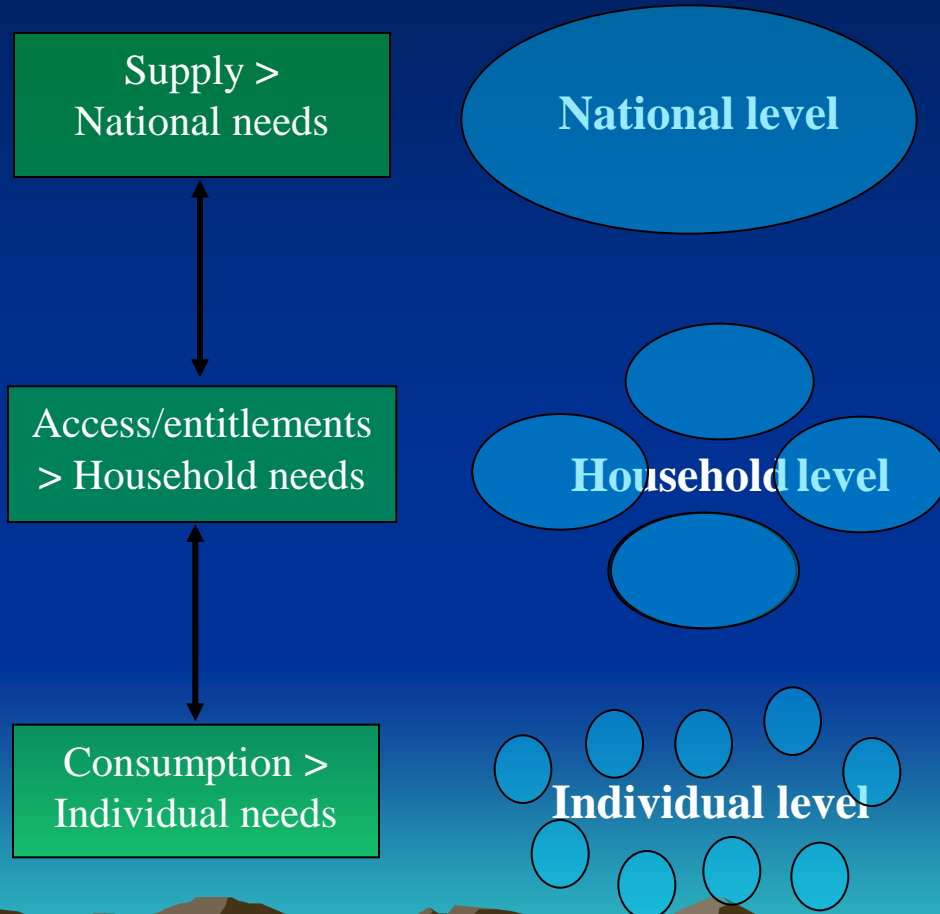
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- Chronic and transitory food insecurity

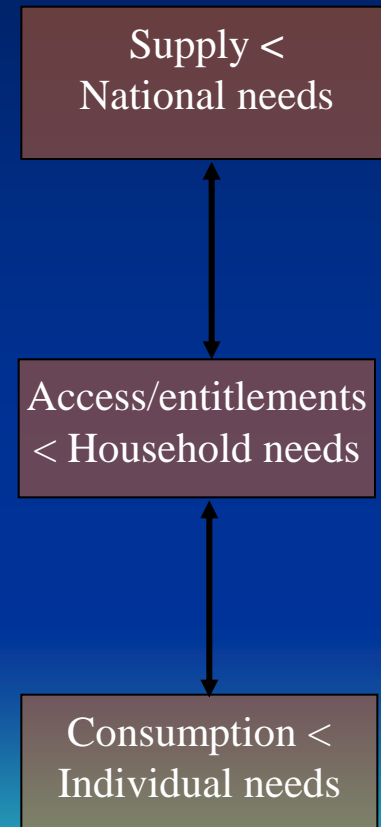
(food insecurity as structural and/or temporary phenomenon?)

# Food (In-)Security at different levels

## Food Security



## Food Insecurity



# A Food Security Policy

has to address all those factors which are

- causing and aggravating food-insecurity,
- and
- **critical** for achieving food security.

# (1) Access

refers to the means and ways which enable households and individuals to obtain the food they need.

Distinguish:

- Economic access
- Physical access
- Social access

# Means of economic ACCESS to food:

- **Own (subsistence) production**
- **Income - from product sales (e.g. coffee)**
  - **from employment (on farm and off-farm, income in cash and kind)**
- **Transfers (public and private)**

# Poverty = Food Insecurity

Insufficient own production + insufficient income from employment and sales = POVERTY = Insufficient means to ACCESS food at household level

## Food Security Issues:

- *Who are the poor and vulnerable to food insecurity?*
- *What are the main features of their livelihood (location, sources of income and subsistence, gender, age, etc.)?*
- *What constraints and problems do they face in making their living?*
- *What needs be done to overcome their problems and constraints?*



# Food insecurity at household level

ca. 40% of the population of Timor-Leste live below poverty line, consequences:

- **Low level of food consumption** in quantitative as well as qualitative (fats, proteins, micronutrients) terms;
- **Acute deprivation** in the wake of droughts or other natural disasters (no assets to live on),
- **Recurrent shortages** during the “hungry season”.



# Features of vulnerable households

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Less vulnerable</b>	<b>More vulnerable</b>
Geographic location	Urban Lowlands Eastern districts	Rural Highlands Western districts
Age of HH head	< 30 years	> 30 years
Sex of HH head	Male	Female
Household size	Small	Large
Education of hh head	Formal education	No completed primary education
Source of income / livelihood	Wage employment, business, other sources	Household farming
Access to land	Larger land holdings (> 0.6 ha per capita)	No access to land or small holdings (< 0.6 ha).
Irrigated land	Yes	No / little
Livestock	More livestock	Less livestock
Electricity, safe water, sanitation	Access to ...	No / poor access to ...
Road access	Good access	Poor access



# Strategic fields of intervention

**Emphasis on agricultural and rural development,**

since:

- Majority of East Timorese population depends on agriculture as source of livelihood,
- Farm households are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity,



# Policy measures to include:

- Improving seed supply,
- Promoting improved and sustainable farming systems,
- Irrigation
- Home gardening
- Livestock development
- Promotion of cash-crop production



# + Promotion of support services and infrastructure

- Research and extension
- Farmers' and community organisations
- Food marketing
- Rural credit system
- Rural roads



# Employment and Income in Other Sectors

Apart from agriculture, important sources of employment and income are also

- fishery
- services
- industry

in East Timor.

*Therefore: Food Security and Poverty Alleviation Strategies must be geared towards **increasing employment and income in these sectors** as well.*

# Targeted approaches / Safety nets

- Until poverty alleviation is achieved and poverty is eliminated on a sustainable basis, special ***targeted approaches*** are needed to ensure that the poor, vulnerable and food insecure population groups obtain the food they need.
- Typical targeted approaches are **social safety nets** and public transfer systems, including feeding programmes, food assistance, cash transfers, cash- and food-for-work programmes.

## (2) Availability

Availability refers to the supply side of the food economy.

A precondition for food security is that **food supplies**, in quantitative and qualitative terms, are **sufficient** to adequately feed the population.



# Sources of Food Supplies

- Domestic food production (subsistence plus marketed production, fisheries),
- Available food stocks (public, commercial, household stocks),
- Commercial food imports,
- Food aid deliveries.

# Domestic Food Production & Imports

In general, **domestic food production** is the **main source of food supplies**.

- Need to be promoted to increase and ensure supplies.

If food **supplies from domestic production** (and available food stocks) are **insufficient** to cover the overall national needs, the balance has to be covered by **food imports**.

- Import policy (e.g. import tax) to be pursued?

# Self-Reliance vs. Self-Sufficiency

- **Dependence on food imports does not necessarily mean food insecurity:** If a country has sufficient foreign exchange to pay for food imports, sufficient food can be made available (e.g. Saudi Arabia case).
- **On the other hand: **Self-sufficiency** in food does not necessarily mean food security:** A country may produce export surpluses and build-up substantial food stocks while many people go hungry (e.g. India case).

# Approx. Cereal Balance of East Timor (2003 – 2004)

## REQUIREMENTS

• Estimated annual staple Food Requirements (rice, maize, cassava), total:	182,000 tons
- Consumption needs	156,000 tons
- Seed, feed, losses	26,000 tons

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## AVAILABILITY

• Crop production (cereal equivalents):	122,000 tons,
• Cereal import requirements: (ca. 40% of consumption needs)	60,000 tons
• Commercial imports	48,000 tons
• Deficit	12,000 tons

\* Source: adapted from FAO/WFP 2003

# What are the trends in...?

- Food requirements
- Food production
- Food import
- Import capacity (foreign exchange)  
in Timor-Leste?

*Implications for food security?*

*Should Timor-Leste strive for (greater) self-sufficiency at national level? Why/why not?*

# (3) Stability

Food security implies that both,

- **access** and
- **availability**

**must be ensured over time.**

# Factors causing Instability

The condition of stability is not fulfilled if there are:

- **Seasonal variation in food production and supplies**, causing temporary shortfalls for poor households (e.g. “hungry season”),
- **Variations of income** as result of fluctuating world market prices (e.g. coffee),
- **Disruptions of supplies/access** in the context of
  - > **natural disasters** (e.g. droughts, floods, etc.)
  - > **man-made disasters** (war, refugee influx, displacements).

# Policy Measures to Stabilise Access and Food Supplies

- promoting **food processing and storage capacities and technologies,**
- offering **temporary employment and income** earning possibilities during critical times,
- measures of **emergency preparedness and crisis management** (early warning, disaster management plan, food aid, food reserves etc).



# (4) Utilisation & Nutrition

**Effective utilisation** refers to the ability to utilise the food in a manner that the **nutritive contents and value of the food** consumed

- **are maintained,**
- and
- **fully absorbed and utilised** by the body.

# Constraints to Effective Utilisation

Effective utilisation of the food is often **inhibited by**

- **diseases,**
- **lack of hygiene, sanitation and safe drinking water,**
- **insufficient knowledge** of how to prepare and consume the food in an appropriate and safe form.

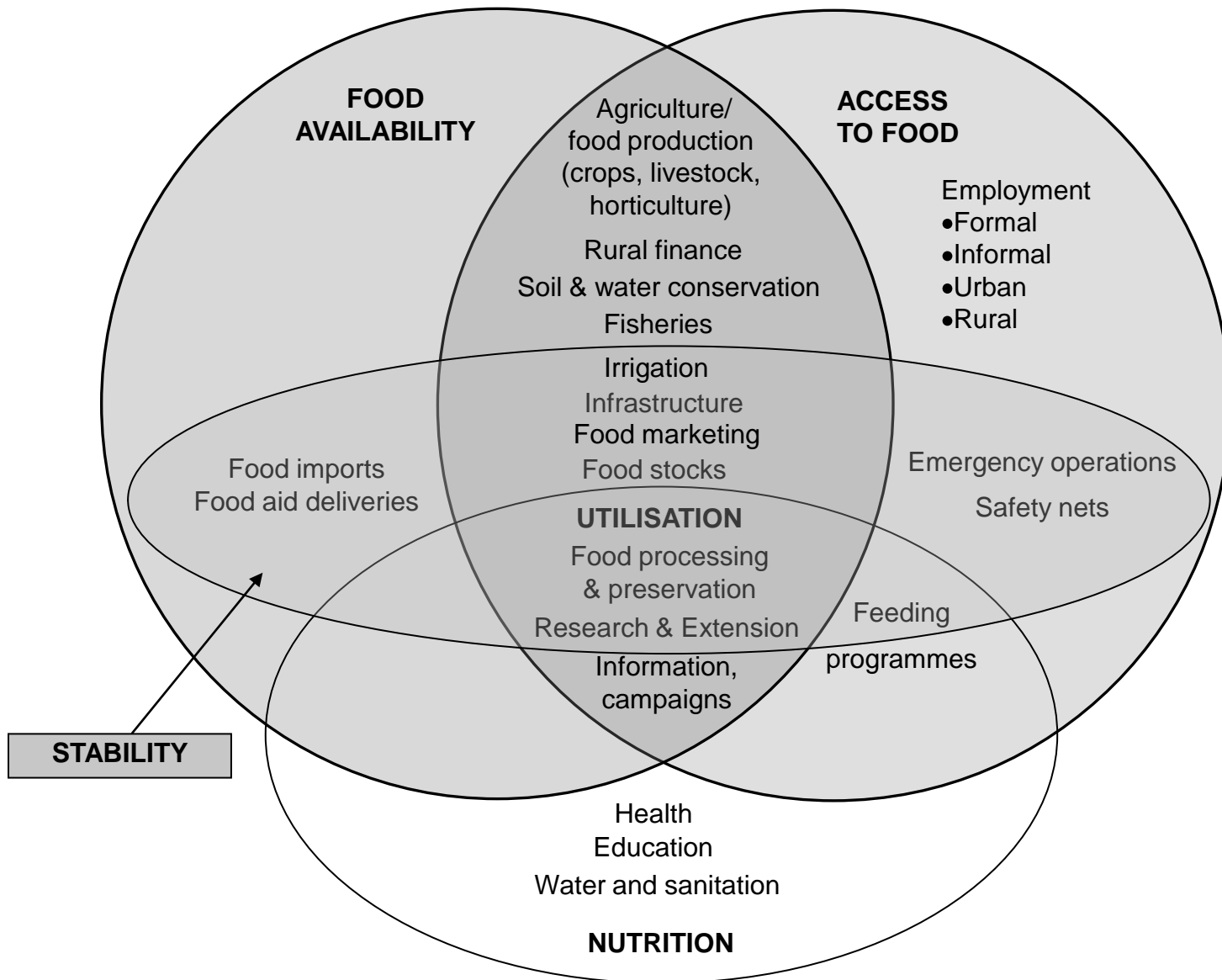
# Improving food utilisation

- Promotion of food processing and storage
- Diversification of consumption habits
- Information campaigns on food and nutrition issues
- Promotion of water supply and sanitation
- Close linkages to National Nutrition and Health Strategies.



# Summary: Food Security Strategic Fields of Action

## Addressing Availability, Access, Stability and/or Utilisation

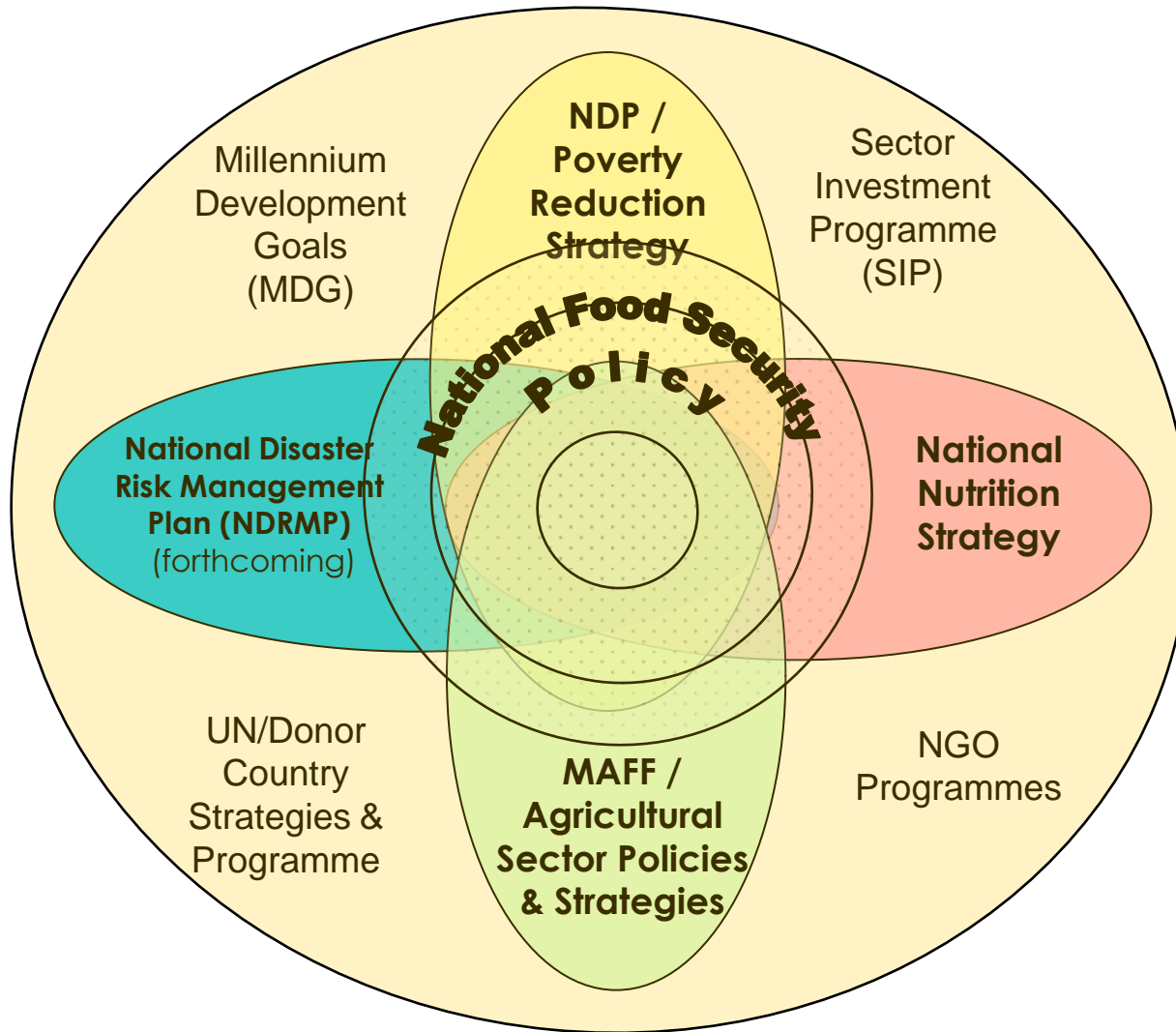


# Institutional Framework – Role of Stakeholders and Coordination Mechanisms

- At central level:
  - National Food Security Committee (NFSC)
  - Role of MAFF and other Government Institutions
- At district level: District Food Security Coordination Committees
- Communities
- Civil Society Organisations
- NGOs
- Private Sector
- Donors & UN Organisations



# Linkages to other Policies, Strategies & Programmes



# Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Establishment of an M & E System serving the following functions:

- Providing the Government and other stakeholder with up-to-date information on the state of implementation of the Food Security Policy;
- Assessment whether the implementation of the policy is on track towards attaining the planned objectives,
- Identification of flaws in the design or implementation of the policy which need to be corrected, and
- to make proposals for respective policy adjustments.

*Close linkages to poverty monitoring to be established, possibly one unified system*



Thank you  
for your attention!

