

Food Security Policy Advice

Summary of a Lessons Learned Study
on three German TC Policy Advisory Projects
in Cambodia, Ethiopia and Mozambique¹

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¹ **Dr. Manfred Metz**, Consultant, is the main author of this overview summary which is based on the Lessons Learned Study, consisting of a summary report and three country reports; these reports were prepared under the leadership of **Michael Hagedorn**, Consultant, in cooperation with **Dr. Ines Reinhard**, Adviser, GTZ Division 42, Priority Area Development-oriented Emergency Aid and **Klaus Pilgram**, Senior Adviser, GTZ Division 45, Section Policy Consultancy in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Sector, between September 2005 and May 2006.

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1. Introduction

Food and nutrition security (FNS) is a basic human right and a prerequisite for development. More than 800 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. In most cases, food and nutrition (FN) insecurity is caused by structural factors such as poverty, food production not keeping pace with population growth, natural resource degradation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the neglect of rural areas in infrastructure and public service provision. Furthermore, structural FN insecurity is often aggravated by man-made and natural disasters.

Tackling the problem of FN insecurity requires appropriate interventions at all levels (macro, meso and micro), taking into account all the factors that have an impact on access to food, food availability, use and utilisation, and stability. For more than 30 years, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH has been providing support to improve the FN situation in many countries. Apart from other types of support in the field of FNS (e.g. integrated food security projects (IFSPs), emergency and refugee food security (FS) operations), several specific FS policy advisory projects (FSPAPs) were introduced some years ago with the aim of ensuring that FNS issues are duly considered at the institutional and policy level, and in order to support governments in the formulation and implementation of food security policies and strategies.

Due to restructuring within both the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and GTZ, the existing FS advisory projects have been phased out as “stand-alone” projects by the end of 2005. In future, as far as German development cooperation (DC) is concerned, food and nutrition security aspects are to be integrated into regular technical cooperation (TC) programmes and projects in fields such as rural development, health, education and social development. In order to facilitate such integration and to make use of the relevant experience gained, a “lessons learned” study of the FS policy advisory projects was conducted in Cambodia (CAM), Ethiopia (ETH), and Mozambique (MOZ) at the end of 2005, before the respective projects in these three countries had come to an end.

This **summary report highlights the major findings of the Lessons Learned Study and draws some conclusions**, particularly focusing on those aspects which are of general importance for the integration of FNS issues into future DC and TC projects and programmes.

2. Relevance of FS Policy Advisory Support

Policy advisory support in the field of FNS was provided in all three countries with the following objectives:

- 1) To address existing problems with FNS,
- 2) To meet FNS objectives in national development policies, strategies and programmes,
- 3) To meet FNS objectives underpinned by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Declaration and the “Right to Food” debate.

Regarding 1), there have been serious problems with food and nutrition insecurity in all three countries, which translates into a high number of people living below the poverty line (ranging from 35% of the population in CAM to over 50% in ETH and MOZ) and high rates of malnutrition in children under five, leading to stunting, wasting, and underweight children. Moreover, structural food insecurity problems have been compounded by recurrent natural disasters (droughts and floods).

Regarding 2), the governments of all three countries set out food security objectives and formulated food (and nutrition) security strategies based on existing FNS problems and encouraged by the World Food Summit in 1996. However, FNS issues were initially largely treated as a special or sectoral issue, with little integration into other national development policies, strategies and programmes.

Regarding 3), the proclamation and adoption of the MDGs and the “Right to Food” debate have further contributed to raising the awareness of policymakers concerning FNS as an issue that needs to be addressed in the context of national development policies.

While *MDG 1 (“Eradicate hunger and poverty”)* directly and explicitly addresses poverty and food insecurity, the other MDGs also have the following implications in terms of FNS:

- *MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education:* Malnourished children are less likely to enrol in, attend, or be attentive at school; and are less likely to perform to their potential, or to complete the school cycle.
- *MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women:* The cycle of hunger and poverty can only be broken if women are empowered to perform their role and functions in the household as well as in economy and society. To do this, they must have equal rights and control over resources and opportunities.
- *MDG 4: Reduce child mortality:* Malnutrition is directly or indirectly associated with child mortality, and is the main contributor to the burden of disease.
- *MDG 5: Improve maternal health:* Maternal health is compromised by intra-household food distribution patterns among family members which are generally unfavourable to women, especially when the amount of food to be shared is limited; malnutrition is also associated with most major risk factors for maternal and child mortality, and for healthy child development.
- *MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases:* Malnutrition weakens resistance to infections and reduces malarial survival rates.
- *MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability:* The poor and hungry are often compelled to pursue practices for their own physical survival that contribute to natural resource depletion. In turn, natural resource depletion and environmental degradation represent a major threat to long-term food security.

By adopting the “Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Food”² (2004), all 187 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) member countries have gone a step further than achieving the MDGs and accepted the right to sufficient and adequate food, not only as a basic human right, but also a legal right, making national governments formally committed to achieving this target.

Coupled with increased awareness of FNS issues and the close links to poverty alleviation, a major concern shared by all the FSPAPs was the need to integrate FNS strategies better and more explicitly into the formulation and implementation of national Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and other national development policies, strategies and programmes, which is discussed in the next section.

3. Integration of FNS into national development policies, strategies and programmes

FNS is a cross-cutting issue, encompassing the following four aspects (also called pillars or dimensions of FNS):

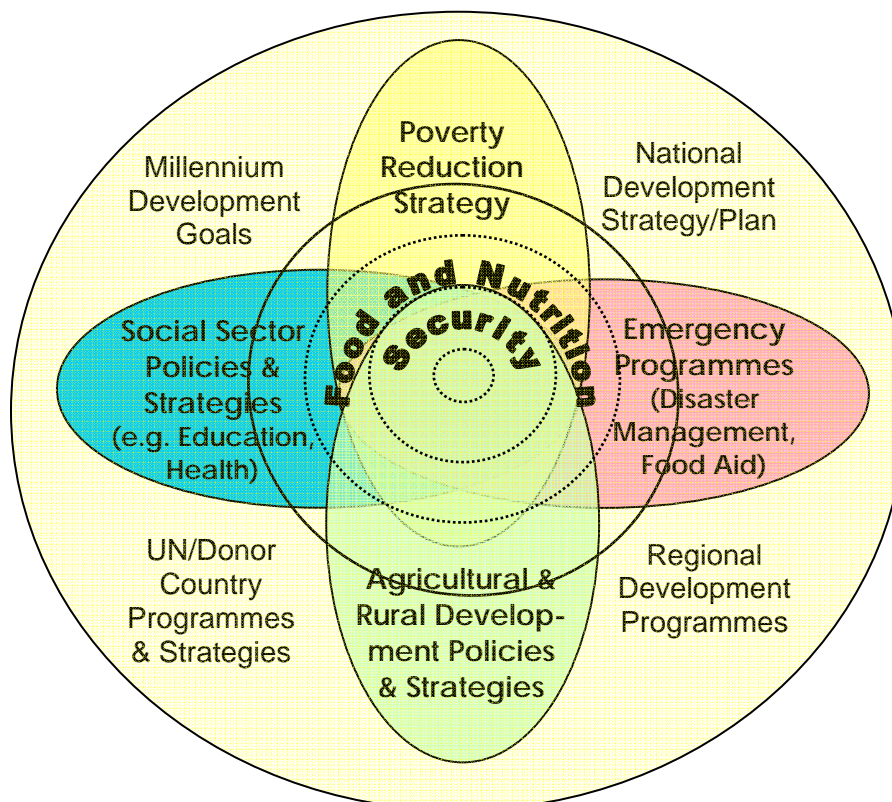
- **Access:** Economic access is closely related to employment, income, poverty and social protection; while physical access is closely related to rural infrastructure and marketing;
- **Availability:** This aspect is closely related to agricultural and food production, and is from a longer-term perspective also related to natural resource conservation;
- **Use and utilisation:** This is closely related to health, nutrition, clean water supply, sanitation and education;
- **Stability:**³ This refers to emergency responses, including relief food aid, in case of man-made or natural disasters as well as seasonal and annual variations in production, supply and demand.

² Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (127th Session of the FAO Council, Rome, November 2004).

³ “Stability” was not mentioned in the Lessons Learned Study as an extra aspect/dimension of FNS; rather, it has been treated, as is the case in many FNS concepts, as inherent in the other three aspects.

If FNS is perceived in such a comprehensive manner, almost all national development policies, strategies and programmes clearly have a bearing on FNS, as Graph 1 illustrates.

Graph 1: Fields of Overlap between National Development Policies/ Strategies/Programmes and FNS



Source: Graph adapted from M. Metz, draft Food Security Policies & Strategies for Lesotho, Sierra Leone and Timor Leste, prepared 2004/5.

The many linkages which exist between the various national development policies/strategies/programmes and FNS call for FNS concerns to be incorporated into the formulation and implementation of these policies, strategies and programmes. The FSPAPs have helped raise awareness of the need for such integration, and have facilitated the establishment and functioning of coordination and cooperation structures and mechanisms.

With the limited personnel and time inputs available, however, it was clear that the FSPAPs could not possibly work on all fronts, thus impeding the full integration of FNS into the relevant national development policies, strategies and programmes. Therefore, some **strategic fields of intervention** were selected which appeared to be the most crucial for achieving better integration under the specific conditions of the countries concerned. These intervention fields were as follows:

- Improvement of the information basis on FNS issues for FNS assessment, monitoring and evaluation (CAM, MOZ),
- Better integration of FNS into the PRSP process (CAM, MOZ),

- FNS capacity building at central and decentralised levels (all countries; the decentralised or regional level was particularly important in Ethiopia),
- Organisational development and promotion of coordination structures (CAM, MOZ),
- Natural resource protection and sustainable land use (ETH),
- Nutrition, particularly micro-nutrient assessment and interventions (CAM).

4. Institutional issues

The cross-cutting nature of FNS theoretically calls for an institutional body to partner the FSPAPs that has a kind of umbrella function and is able to coordinate all government (and other) institutions that are relevant for FNS. This, however, was not the case in any of the three countries. In each case, all FSPAPs were attached to one line ministry as the project partner (the Ministry of Planning (MoP) in Cambodia, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) in Ethiopia, and the Ministry of Agriculture, later renamed the MoARD, in Mozambique).

From the outset, this attachment to one line ministry made it difficult to convince the other relevant ministries and organisations to embark on FNS as a common theme. Many efforts were required – and actually made – by FS policy advisers to reach out to other relevant stakeholders (e.g. the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) in Cambodia) and achieve a (more) effective coordination among them (different government departments, donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other relevant national and international organisations). These efforts were, at least, partially successful in the sense that some kinds of coordination mechanisms for FNS have been established and strengthened with project support. This particularly refers to the technical working groups on FNS which have been formed at national level in all three countries and are promoted by the FSPAPs. Possible impacts on the highest level of political decision-makers are, however, less obvious.

Apart from institutional coordination at the national level, coordination structures and mechanisms at the decentralised level have been promoted in all three countries. In Ethiopia, particular efforts have also been made to promote cooperation and exchange of experience between the regions.

5. Linking FS policy advice with other interventions and support measures – An issue of effectiveness

Although formally organised as stand-alone projects, all three FSPAPs were not confined to merely providing advisory support, but were provided with a budget to implement pilot measures and to test innovative approaches in the field. Furthermore, the FSPAPs in two of the three countries (Cambodia and Ethiopia) were designed as a sort of follow-up to (and partly overlapping with) other GTZ-supported food security programmes. Linking policy advice to interventions in the field in this fashion has several advantages, all of which contribute to rendering the policy advisory function more effective. As a result,

- innovative approaches to improving FNS can be tested;
- if successful, results can be demonstrated and the approaches replicated;
- if tangible results are produced, the project attracts more attention from the public, other stakeholders and policymakers;
- the project gains greater publicity, probably better funding, and thus could potentially achieve a greater impact.

The list of innovations made by the three projects is quite impressive, ranging from food fortification in Cambodia, 13 technical innovations in Ethiopia, and the development of a toolbox for decentralised planning and implementation in Mozambique. Also, important cross-cutting issues like gender/empowerment of women, HIV/AIDS-mainstreaming, crisis prevention/disaster management could be integrated into the project design, particularly in ETH and MOZ. Such innovations have been partly produced in connection with other German-assisted rural development programmes; the link between the different TC components helped realise synergies in terms of further dissemination as well as integration into the national FNS strategies, and assisted in making them operational.

It can be concluded that policy, like any other type of advisory support, is likely to be more effective if combined with the provision of funds for implementing, testing and demonstrating relevant innovative measures in practice. This calls for a programme approach with different components. The resources needed to fund the different programme components do not necessarily have to come from just one donor; donor harmonisation, as stipulated by the Paris Declaration (whereby different donors make complementary contributions, taking into account their comparative advantages), can also work well here, alongside tripartite cooperation arrangements.

6. Capacity building

Capacity building was a core activity and objective of all three projects. Based on an assessment of training needs, a wide scope of training topics was offered, ranging from awareness creation and better understanding of the concept of FNS through to the planning and implementation of FNS projects (including applications of the innovative approaches developed) in the field. An important contribution in this respect was offered by InWent (Capacity Building International, Germany)⁴. The target groups of the training measures comprised government staff of relevant ministries and institutions at headquarters and decentralised levels, NGO staff, community representatives and field staff.

As a result of the training measures, a critical mass of government officials and members of other organisations at all levels was familiarised with the concept of FNS and its application. This enabled these individuals to put FNS issues into the context of national development, to assess their relevance, and to design, plan, implement and monitor FNS interventions at the different levels. Participants of training programmes explicitly articulated the benefits they derived from the projects.

⁴ cf. InWent, K. Klennert (ed.), *Achieving Food and Nutrition Security: A Training Course Reader*, Feldafing 2005.

7. Conditions for sustainability

Now that the last three German-supported FSPAPs have come to an end, one key question remains: what permanent changes have been induced by these interventions, i.e. will there be a sustainable impact leading to improved FNS? Although this question cannot be answered firmly at this stage, assumptions can be made in terms of important conditions which must be in place if the results achieved are to have a sustainable impact. Four major conditions can be identified in this regard:

- 1) Political will
- 2) Appropriate institutional set-ups and coordination mechanisms
- 3) The capacity to deal with FNS issues
- 4) Further donor support for FNS interventions.

These **four conditions** can be assessed in detail as follows:

- 1) The problems of food and nutrition insecurity have not yet diminished; indeed, they are still prevalent and continue to pose a major humanitarian and development threat. It can be assumed that this fact will be clearly reiterated during the forthcoming “*World Food Summit – 10 Years After*”, reinforcing the political will of all sides (governments of countries with prevailing FN insecurity, the international community) to do something (or to do more than before) about this issue.
- 2) Proper treatment of FNS issues at policy level requires an appropriate institutional set-up and effective coordination mechanisms. The projects have worked towards this end and have made progress, particularly on the technical level. However, further efforts must be made to integrate FNS aspects and concerns more successfully into the PRS processes and overall national development planning, which in turn requires initiatives from the highest political decision-making level. This may happen if Condition 1 above applies, and could possibly be promoted by further FNS policy advisory support at the political decision-making level.
- 3) Effective FNS interventions depend on competent government staff at all levels. Again, the projects have been successful in building capacity, but more remains to be done. In this context, it is particularly important that existing capacities are actually challenged and used, i.e. that FNS remains a prominent topic on the political agenda of these countries, and leads to appropriate action at all levels. This again depends on the two above-mentioned conditions, in conjunction with Condition 4 mentioned below:
- 4) Taking into account the dimensions and severity of FN insecurity in the low-income, food-deficit countries, including the three countries covered by the previous FSPAPs, it would be unrealistic to assume that this problem can be solved purely using the countries’ own resources and capacities. The governments of the countries concerned have to take decisive steps, but further and significant support will be required from the international community. Once again, this also depends on the requirements mentioned under Condition 1 above, namely the respective political will, in this case referring to donor countries.

8. Overall conclusion and outlook

Overall, the following conclusions can be drawn from the Lessons Learned Study: FS policy advice as provided under the FSPAPs was relevant in terms of addressing existing needs and development priorities; effective in terms of inducing changes designed to improve the FNS situation; efficient, if combined with implementation of relevant actions; and sustainable in terms of the results achieved, assuming continued political will and available resources for FNS interventions.

Effective FNS policy advice requires awareness of FNS issues, political will and endorsement at a high political level. Such conditions must be there from the outset since they cannot be generated by a single project. To foster such conditions, the international and donor community must make a concerted effort to enhance political dialogue with the governments in question, backed up with a commitment to provide substantial support.

Policy advice works from the central through the regional and down to the local level, and vice versa. Particularly important from the central to the decentralised levels is the breakdown of the national FNS objectives and concept into regional strategies and local actions, while the feedback of information on innovative approaches and best practices from the field to the district, regional and national levels helps integrate such experience into national and regional FNS strategies and makes them operational.

There is a need and scope for further support in this field under international DC, particularly in terms of:

- offering FS policy advice at the political decision-making level;
- combining FS policy advice with the implementation of relevant actions and programmes;
- integrating FNS concerns further and more comprehensively into the PRS process and other national development strategies and programmes, including strategies linking relief with development, and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in relevant countries;
- developing FS assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems, and integrating FS assessment and monitoring into poverty assessment and monitoring.

Annex

Summary of Country and Project-specific Issues Related to the Lessons Learned Study of FS Policy Advisory Projects in Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Mozambique

This annex summarises some important issues related to the individual country and project cases, complementing the general lessons learned from all the FSPAPs in the three countries as presented in the summary report.

CAMBODIA

The Cambodian **Food Security and Nutrition Policy Support Project (FSNPSP)** started in November 2002 and terminated in December 2005. It was based on experience with a previous IFSP supported by German TC in the Kampot Province, starting in 1996. The MoP was the project partner, Mr. **Peter Kaufmann** the German Policy Adviser, and the project budget amounted to 1.8 million Euro.

Institutional framework conditions and cooperation structures:

- A **complex institutional framework** with partly unclear and/or overlapping responsibilities called for flexible and pragmatic approaches in project planning and implementation, guided by an orientation towards outcomes/development results.
- **The project partner (MoP) had overall planning functions** but no implementation capacities, nor was it able to coordinate effectively with other ministries. To overcome this constraint, the project established a close working relationship with CARD. In addition to its role as coordinating body for agricultural and rural development, **CARD has an overarching function** with a hierarchical status above the line ministries, and was hence appropriately positioned to deal with FNS as a cross-sectoral issue.
- Apart from MoP and CARD, the FSNPSP initiated and supported a number of **other institutions, working groups and committees** dealing with FNS issues at central and provincial level, in order to ensure better coordination and cooperation. The project was unable, however, to induce the institutional changes which would have been necessary to ensure effective coordination and implementation of FNS interventions.

Fields of intervention:

- A major field of activity of the FSNPSP was **capacity building** in FNS among all major actors involved in FNS planning and implementation. The project worked towards **improving the cooperation and coordination** structures among the various institutions.
- The project was directly concerned with the **integration of FNS issues into the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS)** and the forthcoming **National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP)**. Awareness of FNS issues increased among stakeholders, and the project was widely accepted as being competent in FNS matters. The project also worked towards developing indicators that could **monitor** FNS.

- The FSNPSP worked towards **improving the information and data basis on FNS** in Cambodia, e.g. by assisting CARD in establishing and operating a web-based Food Security and Nutrition Information System (FSNIS) or by adapting, together with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), a standardised indicator base and data dissemination and presentation tool (CAMInfo).
- In some strategic fields related to FNS, the project initiated and/or supported research and dissemination of a number of **innovative approaches and best practices** in fields such as the prevention and treatment of micro-nutrient deficiencies, a system of rice intensification, or an approach to identify poor and food-insecure households. In order to ensure continuation of such activities, the project liaised with other institutions and organisations.

ETHIOPIA

The policy advisory project in Ethiopia started as a **Food Security Capacity Building Project** in May 2002 and was merged into a broader technical assistance (TA) programme, the “Sustainable Use of Natural Resources for Food Security (SUN)”. The partner ministry at the central level is the MoARD. The SUN Programme draws on the experience of an IFSP in the Amhara region, and maintains operational units in three regions where it works closely with the regional Food Security Coordination Offices (FSCOs) and natural resources departments. The Programme Coordinator is Mr. **Winfried Zarges**.

Institutional framework conditions and cooperation structures:

- **Networking, coordination and cooperation mechanisms** with the government and other donor agencies at national and regional levels are necessary in order to make use of complementarities and to achieve synergies. In Ethiopia suitable fora exist for such purposes, such as the Coalition for Food Security, the Productive Safety Net Programme and technical working groups. The TC programme is an active member of these fora.
- Most cooperation partners concerned with implementation appreciated the **overarching functions of the policy advisory component**, which helped conceptually to link the various initiatives together under common FNS objectives and strategies.
- In order to ensure sustainability, deliberate efforts need to be made to **institutionalise the FNS interventions**, i.e. to integrate them into established governmental and non-governmental structures and procedures, rather than to implement the measures under a special TC programme, as is still largely the case in Ethiopia.

Fields of intervention:

- Successful implementation of FNS strategies depends on **FNS awareness, capacities and resources at all levels** – by focusing in particular on and contributing to capacity building of decentralised structures and public and non-public service providers, the TC programme helped fill critical gaps at this level.
- **Policy advice** is more effective if **linked to the implementation of innovative approaches and best practices** at target group level. Thus, it helps to demonstrate the feasibility of approaches and tangible impacts. The TC programme has been particularly strong in producing and disseminating a number of technical innovations and examples of

best practices (e.g. Triticale (seeds), incentive-for-work programmes, gully rehabilitation, etc.).

- The **three-level approach** applied in Ethiopia allowed information and experience on innovative approaches and best practices to be fed back from the field to the regional and national levels, thereby integrating such experiences into the national and regional FNS strategies and making them operational. To this end, special efforts must be made to document such experience systematically and to publicise them more widely.

MOZAMBIQUE

Following the World Food Summit in 1996, the Mozambican Cabinet elaborated and adopted a national Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (ESAN), and the MoARD was mandated to coordinate its implementation by establishing food security secretariats (SETSAN) at central and provincial levels. Based on previous German-supported IFSPs in two provinces, the MoARD requested advisory support for implementing and updating the strategy. **The FSPAP** started in 2000 and terminated in December 2005; Mr. **Alberto Vega-Exposito** was the FS policy adviser during the second phase. The project budget amounted to up to 3 million Euro.

Institutional framework conditions and cooperation structures:

- For **coordinating and implementing the national FNS strategy**, food security secretariats were established at central and provincial levels, hosted by the MoARD. Due to cross-sectoral FNS issues, it was found that attaching these secretariats to the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) would have been a more appropriate solution. The MPD also hosts the Secretariat that is in charge of supervising the PRS process. The situation in Mozambique is the complete opposite of Cambodia, where the MoP was found to be too weak to coordinate cross-sectoral implementation of the FNS strategy (see above). This calls for a careful assessment of institutional mandates and capacities before the posting of policy advisers, and for partners with implementation mandates and capacities to be integrated.
- In spite of efforts by the FSPAP to strengthen the **provincial secretariats**, they remained rather weak. Their performance was severely constrained by a lack of budgetary resources for covering operational costs and for implementing FNS activities.
- Based on lobbying for FNS by the FSPAP and recommendations made by the donor coordination group on Poverty Analysis and Monitoring (PAMS), FNS concerns will be more explicitly **integrated into the second PRSP (PARPA II)** for the period 2006-2009. This, however, has not yet led to institutional changes. It appears extremely difficult for policy advice to induce such changes.

Fields of intervention:

- Initial attempts to promote the implementation of the FNS strategy largely failed because of the institutional constraints (see above). As a consequence, policy advisory support has shifted towards **integrating FNS into the PRS process**.

- **The collection and analysis of relevant data** has helped create public awareness regarding FNS, and has facilitated the mainstreaming of FNS concerns into national development and sector strategies, particularly the preparation of the second PRSP.
- A successful implementation of FNS strategies depends on sensitising decentralised public and non-public actors, ensuring their cooperation and developing mechanisms for decentralised planning and resource allocation. The FSPAP has paved the way towards this end by preparing **guidelines for the integration of FNS** into decentralised district planning, for the integration of FNS interventions into the annual operational and budget planning, and for the preparation of feasibility studies and project proposals. Nevertheless, it still has to be demonstrated that these guidelines are actually being applied.
- The FSPAP has developed a **shared monitoring and evaluation system** at provincial level based on result chain analysis, which is designed to involve all relevant actors. However, since it remains unclear whether this system is already being applied, its practical application (as per the guidelines mentioned above) may require some further advisory support.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)
CAM	Cambodia
CARD	Council for Agricultural and Rural Development, CAM
DC	Development Cooperation
ESAN	National Food and Nutrition Strategy, MOZ
ETH	Ethiopia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FN	Food and nutrition
FNS	Food and nutrition security
FS	Food security
FSNPSP	Food Security and Nutrition Policy Support Project, CAM
FSPAP	Food security policy advisory projects
FSCO	Food Security Coordination Office
FSNIS	Food Security and Nutrition Information System
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, Germany
IFSP	Integrated food security project
InWEnt	Capacity Building International, Germany (Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung)
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, Germany (German Development Bank)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MOZ	Mozambique
MPD	Ministry of Planning and Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPRS	National Poverty Reduction Strategy
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
PAMS	Poverty Analysis and Monitoring Systems
PARPA	Mozambican Poverty Reduction Strategy
PPP	Public-private partnership
PRS(P)	Poverty Reduction Strategy (Paper)
SETSAN	National Technical Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security, MOZ
SUN	Sustainable Use of Natural Resources for Food Security, ETH
TA	Technical Assistance
TC	Technical Cooperation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund