Access to diverse and fresh produce is often especially challenging in humanitarian contexts, as people lose access to fields and markets. These vegetables were grown in a refugee settlement in Kyangwali, Uganda.

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HUMANITARIAN ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

ADVOCATING WITH AND FOR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE HUNGER-CLIMATE-CONFLICT NEXUS

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

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Acknowledgments

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. FACING THE HUNGER-CLIMATE-CONFLICT NEXUS

The past years have not only shattered global warming records (WMO 2025), they also saw more violent conflicts than ever before (BICC and others 2024). **Climate change and conflict** – both human-made phenomena – and their impacts occur in combination in many places, continuously eroding the resilience of the most vulnerable communities, who find themselves confronted with harvest losses, threats by non-state armed groups, and a severe disruption of their access basic services. **Food and nutrition insecurity** is one of the most prominent consequences of this dangerous combination of crises: as markets close and harvests are destroyed – by drought, floods or conflict actors – many cannot access and/or afford basic food-stuffs anymore, let alone a diverse diet.

The complex, highly localised interactions between food insecurity, climate impacts and ongoing conflicts appear in many places:

» In **Mali**, flooding has reduced yields, while communities are afraid to leave the village to reach further-out fields due to the presence of non-state armed groups. Ongoing conflict has crippled the local economy, so people cannot pursue alternative livelihood opportunities. With a reduced harvest, food and nutrition insecurity are widespread – and re-planting fields becomes harder each year due to a lack of agricultural inputs, potentially causing further deterioration in the future.

» In **South Sudan**, communities reported reduced harvests due to flooding. The impact was especially high for those who had previously been displaced due to conflict, and who had been unable to build resilience or to set aside assets since their displacement.

» In **Somalia**, drought regularly causes the loss of pasture and cattle for pastoralist communities. Even if they can access external food sources to bridge this time, their access to nutritious and diverse food is hindered by the high level **of non-state armed group taxation, which requires a large share of people's income.**

Mali: Female headed household affected by conflict and climate shocks

"Women are afraid to go into the bush in search of wood for cooking or to look for material for making mats. Girls are afraid to go to the river to do their laundry."
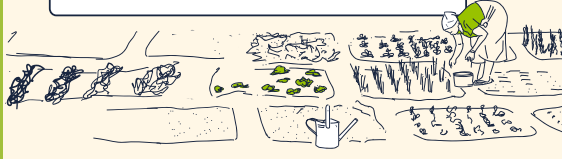
Fear of attack if they go outside the village affects every aspect of women's daily lives and reduces their ability to earn income from traditional crafts (weaving straw mats) and petty trade. However, their primary concern is the combined effects of conflict and climate shocks on food production and market prices.

"...it is the flooding problem that worries me the most. It has greatly reduced the harvest, so I am worried about the availability of rice in our village. All prices have increased."

Remittances can be lifeline, but with price rises it's a struggle to manage on a fixed income and with few other options to earn an income, households go into debt.

"My husband went away to Senegal to find work. He sells coffee and sends money each month for food but it is not sufficient for the good months, let alone the hungry season. When I need to, I borrow money from acquaintances to feed the household and I will continue to work in the vegetable garden."

With adult males away working, households lack the labour and resources needed to farm their own rice fields. They can only rely on getting paddy rice from neighbours (as a gift or in return for working on the farm) when harvests are good.

"We eat rice and millet because that is all I can afford. Household members don't eat as much as they would like. Some eat less than others, this to leave something for the smaller ones. ...the meals are not always tasty. They do not often contain condiments, meat, and vegetables. I cannot afford a varied diet."

This story, as well as other quotes and examples used throughout this toolkit, were collected as part of two assessment studies on climate-and conflict induced hunger, conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) for Action Against Hunger. For more information: see References.

Complexity in action: mapping the hunger-climate-conflict nexus

Gendered impacts

Some community members are especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and conflict: women and children become more exposed to **protection risks** such as gender-based violence, especially in cramped and unsafe living conditions caused by displacement. Children are adversely affected by negative coping mechanisms implemented in response to rising poverty, such as early forced marriage and child labour, while often losing access to education and health services.

Reports from Borena and Somali, two drought-affected regions of **Ethiopia**, show that displaced women and children are especially at risk of violence due to inadequate and cramped housing, but also when leaving their settlements to collect firewood and water. They are ad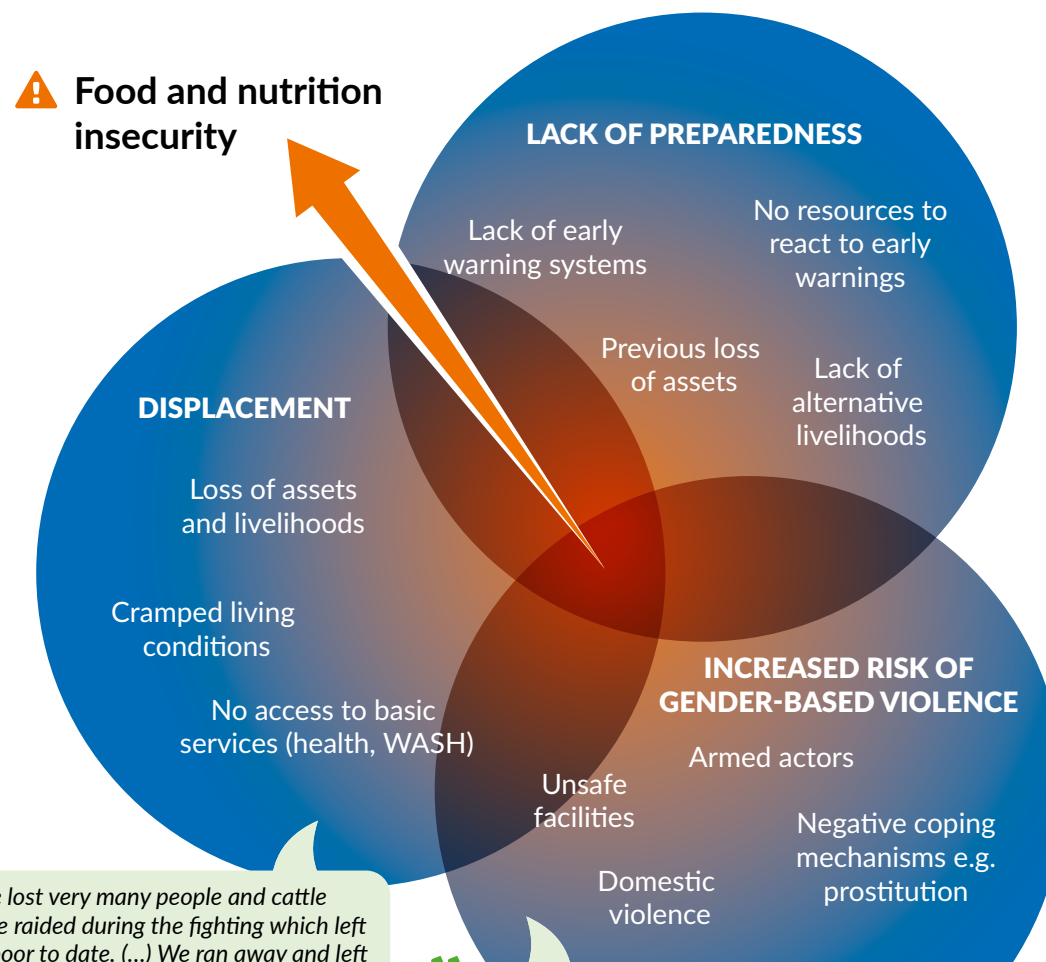versely affected by **negative coping mechanisms** that are implemented in response to resource scarcity, such as prostitution, forced early marriage and child labour. At the same time, a **lack of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities** and sanitary products is impacting the safety of women and girls.

ⓘ *See ↗ Annex for an additional overview of compounding vulnerabilities in the hunger-climate-conflict nexus.*

⚠ **Food and nutrition insecurity**

LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

Lack of early warning systems

No resources to react to early warnings

Previous loss of assets

Lack of alternative livelihoods

DISPLACEMENT

Loss of assets and livelihoods

Cramped living conditions

No access to basic services (health, WASH)

INCREASED RISK OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Armed actors

Unsafe facilities

Negative coping mechanisms e.g. prostitution

Domestic violence

> *"We lost very many people and cattle were raided during the fighting which left us poor to date. (…) We ran away and left our sorghum and moved with nothing and without any food to eat."*
>
> Interviewee in Mankuac, South Sudan

> *"The security is not good and it has affected everyone especially at night. The women and girls can't go anywhere far from their home and even the home is not safe because these are not strong structures and one can easily come in and steal something or even assault the women. We had a case of women who went to fetch firewood and were assaulted but for that we have no support (…) and the women are not taken care of in case of an assault."*
>
> Woman in a camp for internally displaced people, Baidoa, Somalia

2. WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS

As part of the humanitarian community, Action Against Hunger supports communities most affected by this vicious cycle through humanitarian and resilience programming that directly mitigates the impacts of climate change and conflict on people's lives, enabling dignified access to food, health services, WASH facilities and livelihoods. But affected communities are often stuck in a vicious cycle, seeing their resilience deteriorate with every successive shock, and staying dependent on humanitarian aid. In this context, **engaging in advocacy serves two purposes:**

» **Improving the humanitarian response:** By enabling communities to voice their needs and wishes, humanitarian actors can improve their own response and become more accountable – not just as single agencies, but also as a humanitarian community as a whole. Listening to community voices can also help adapt to new challenges such as climate change-induced changes in livelihoods.

» **Addressing the root causes of humanitarian needs:** In protracted crises, the high level of humanitarian needs is often not caused by a single event, but by underlying fragilities in the provision of basic services, food production, disaster preparedness as well as existing vulnerabilities in communities. Moreover, existing national policies, their implementation and resource level might be inadequate. This provides several entry points to substantially improve living conditions for affected communities, to eliminate the need for repeated humanitarian interventions and to enable a resilient and dignified community-led response.

Advocacy can contribute to saving lives in the future and to using limited resources in an efficient way.

! **What advocacy is NOT:**

» **Resource mobilisation:** Increased fundingv might be a positive side effect of increased political and public attention to an issue, but it should not be the primary target of advocacy activities.

» **Communications:** This refers to public activities on social media and media outreach, aiming to inform and mobilise. Advocacy also targets decision-makers directly with specific objectives. However, advocacy and communications are closely linked: by mobilising public support, communications can be a key tool for advocacy (↗ STEP 4).

Vulnerable people and communities
Human education, skills, health
Sociocultural identity, beliefs, community, traditions
Political participation, power
Physical infrastructure, ecosystem health and resources
Financial savings, loans, markets, diversification

Risks and impacts
Livelihood insecurity
Food and nutrition insecurity
Chronic and acute malnutrition
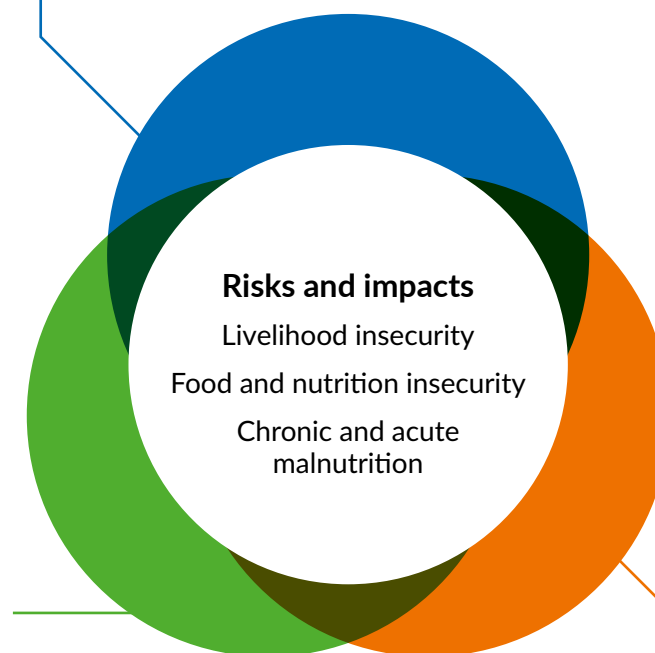
Fragile systems
Governance and political economy
lagging socioeconomic development; weak health and social policies; land tenure insecurity; marginalisation and grievances
Weak environmental and natural resource management; ecological degradation
Cultural and societal values
gender norms, age and disability/ability

Shocks and stresses
Climate hazards
extremes, shifting seasons
Conflict non-state armed groups, political-/communal-/gender-based violence

3.   HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit serves several purposes and can be used in different ways. **Firstly**, it is a repository of evidence and stories on the compounding impacts of conflict and climate impacts on people's food and nutrition security, focusing on ACF-led evidence and programming in Mali, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda. **Secondly**, the toolkit is designed to enable humanitarian actors at local,
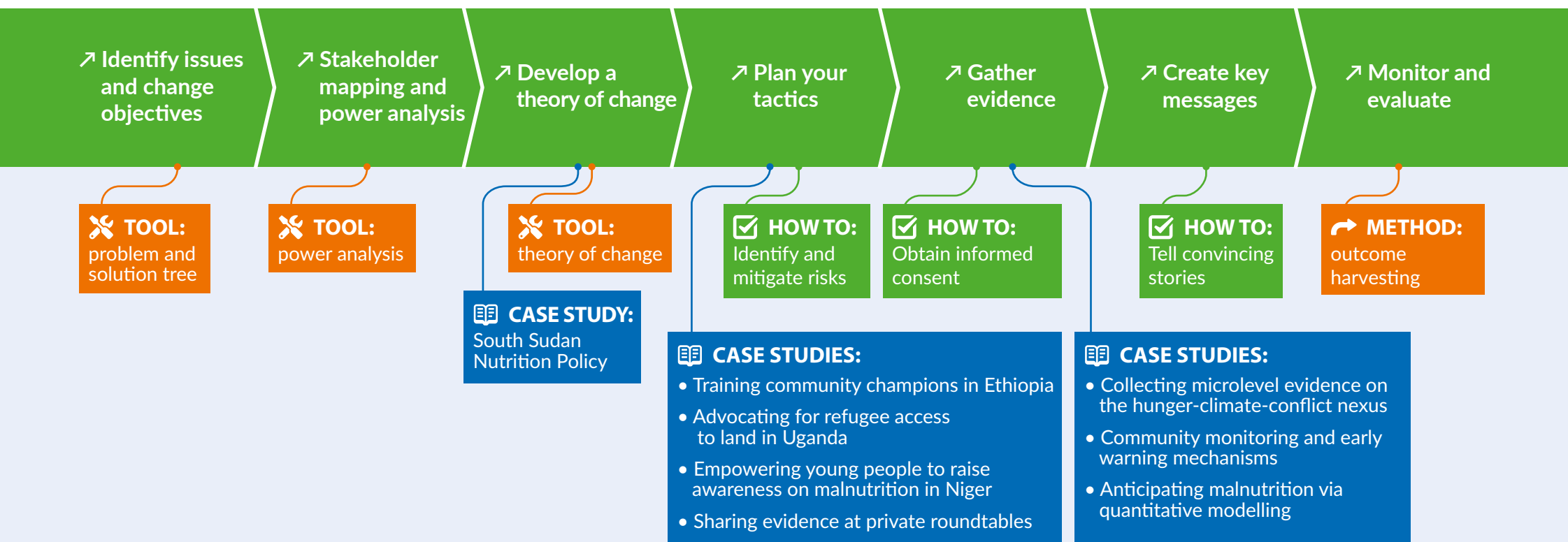
regional and global levels to develop their own advocacy plan, including change objectives and tactics, to advocate for an improved evidence-based humanitarian response to climate-induced food and nutrition insecurity in conflict contexts. This includes designing advocacy plans based on community feedback and inputs.

The toolkit can be used both by actors with previous experience in advocacy, to help sharpen their objectives and tools in specific contexts and situations; or it can be used to develop new advocacy plans and activities by actors who have not previously engaged in advocacy. The tools are designed to be easily replicable, and can be translated for use by community actors if necessary.

| ↗ **Identify issues and change objectives** | ↗ **Stakeholder mapping and power analysis** | ↗ **Develop a theory of change** | ↗ **Plan your tactics** | ↗ **Gather evidence** | ↗ **Create key messages** | ↗ **Monitor and evaluate** |

TOOL: problem and solution tree

TOOL: power analysis

TOOL: theory of change

CASE STUDY: South Sudan Nutrition Policy

HOW TO: Identify and mitigate risks

HOW TO: Obtain informed consent

HOW TO: Tell convincing stories

METHOD: outcome harvesting

CASE STUDIES:
- Training community champions in Ethiopia
- Advocating for refugee access to land in Uganda
- Empowering young people to raise awareness on malnutrition in Niger
- Sharing evidence at private roundtables

CASE STUDIES:
- Collecting microlevel evidence on the hunger-climate-conflict nexus
- Community monitoring and early warning mechanisms
- Anticipating malnutrition via quantitative modelling

B.   PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND CHANGE OBJECTIVES

The first step of any advocacy initiative is the identification of an **issue or problem** you would like to tackle, as well as the formulation of a clear **change objective** to strategically guide your efforts.

STEP 1A: ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

TOOL: Problem tree

One approach to identify your focus issue and objectives is the problem tree, which is especially useful to better understand complex problems by differentiating between their causes and effects. This tool is best used in a **workshop format** with multiple participants.

1. Draw a large tree with multiple branches and roots. Identify the overall problem you are discussing – this has to be done in agreement with all participants – and write it on the tree trunk.

2. Write your answers to two questions on sticky notes: **Why is this happening?** and **What are the consequences?** Add these to the roots and the branches of the tree while discussing the relations between causes and consequences: some causes may be deeper-rooted than others, and some might be interconnected. You can illustrate these connections with lines and arrows, and/or create clusters of causes and consequences.

When working on complex and protracted crises with a multitude of causes and effects, it can be hard to prioritise which issues you want to focus on. Nevertheless, with limited resources, this is a

3. In an open discussion, identify the cause, consequence or cause-and-effect relationship that you would like to prioritise in your advocacy. Some guiding questions include: **Do we have a concrete solution to propose? Will we focus on changing the root causes, or addressing the symptoms? Is the intended change feasible given our scope, resources and mandate?**

4. If it is helpful to advance the group discussion or to imagine possible changes and entry points, you can then turn the problem tree into a **solutions tree** by turning the negative statements into positive ones. This is an optional step – if you have already identified the problem you would like to address, you can work on your change objective (↗ step 1B).

Identifying issues and change objectives through dialogue

In order to identify the most relevant issue for your advocacy, it is advisable to gather as many perspectives as possible and to involve key stakeholders in the process, especially those affected by the problem. For instance, you could conduct a workshop with affected communities, or conduct a survey to understand their main concerns. You could also consider asking other organisations working on similar issues about their perspectives and the gaps they see in their own advocacy to understand where you can add value.

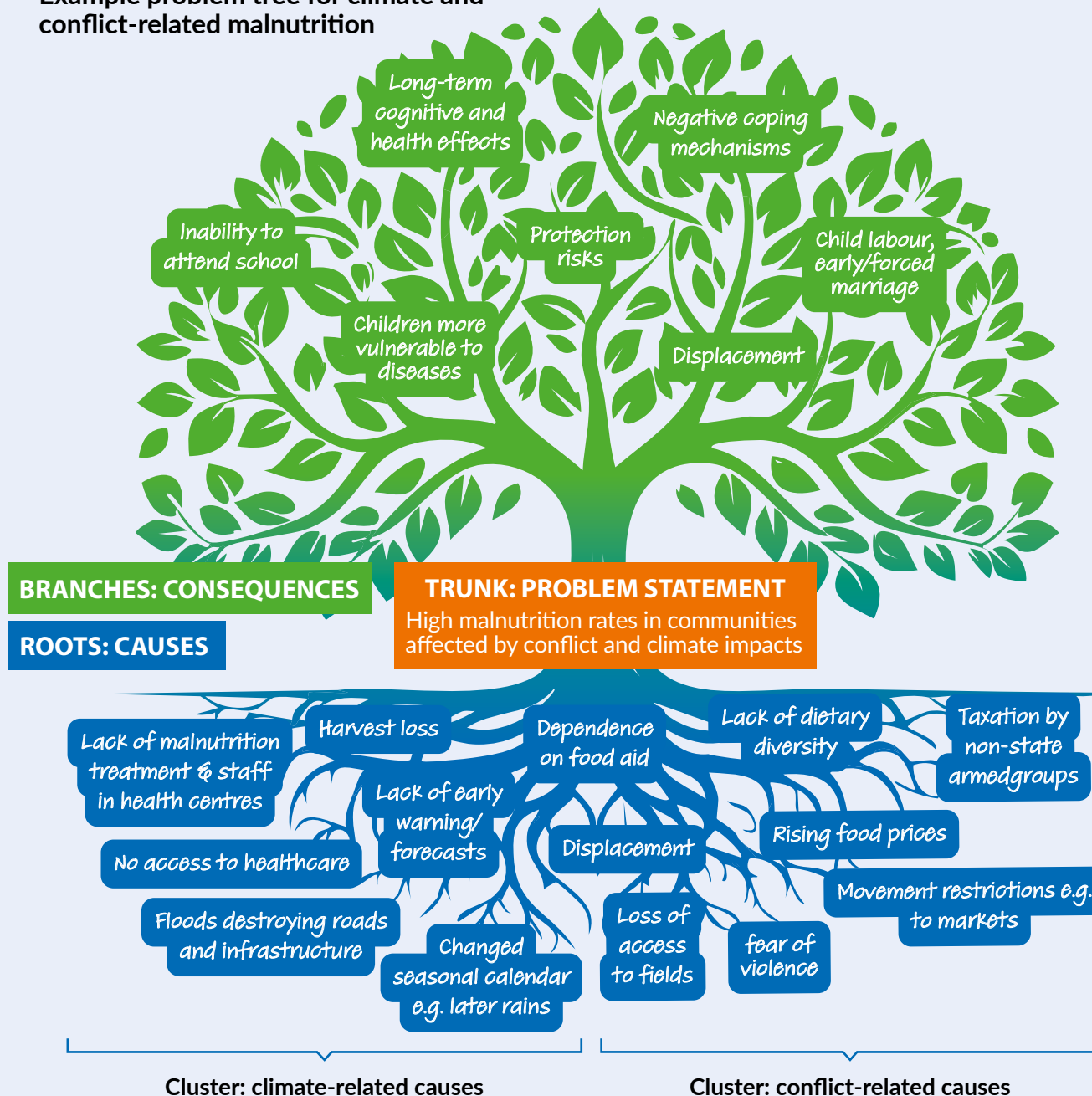↗ **STEP 4** on community-led advocacy and ↗ **STEP 5** on gathering evidence

Access to land has allowed refugees in Adjumani, Uganda, to grow their own crops using the efficient 'Optimised Land Use Model'.   © Action Against Hunger

Example problem tree for climate and conflict-related malnutrition

BRANCHES: CONSEQUENCES

ROOTS: CAUSES

TRUNK: PROBLEM STATEMENT
High malnutrition rates in communities affected by conflict and climate impacts

Long-term cognitive and health effects

Negative coping mechanisms

Inability to attend school

Protection risks

Child labour, early/forced marriage

Children more vulnerable to diseases

Displacement

Lack of malnutrition treatment & staff in health centres

Harvest loss

Dependence on food aid

Lack of dietary diversity

Taxation by non-state armedgroups

Lack of early warning/ forecasts

No access to healthcare

Displacement

Rising food prices

Floods destroying roads and infrastructure

Changed seasonal calendar e.g. later rains

Loss of access to fields

fear of violence

Movement restrictions e.g. to markets

Cluster: climate-related causes   **Cluster: conflict-related causes**

STEP 1B: CHANGE OBJECTIVE

Once you have identified the issue you would like to address, try phrasing a specific change objective to guide your efforts. In order to be useful for planning and monitoring purposes, your objective should be SMART:

- ✓ **S**pecific: precisely defined and unambiguous.
- ✓ **M**easurable
- ✓ **A**chievable: consider the external context, but also your own resources and position.
- ✓ **R**elevant: based on your and key stakeholders' understanding of the problem.
- ✓ **T**ime-Bound

Here are some examples of SMART change objectives you could set based on the example problem tree:

» In the upcoming budget round, the regional government will allocate at least 5% of its budget to fighting malnutrition.

» Within the next eight months, community-led early warning systems for climate-related hazards will be set up in 3 communities.

If it is challenging to phrase a SMART objective for the issue you have chosen, you might have to take a step back to the problem tree: Can the issue be narrowed down to become more achievable, for instance?

STEP 2: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND POWER ANALYSIS

Once you have identified your advocacy change objective, ask yourself: Who has the power to change this? Who is blocking change? This step will show you whom to talk to and whom to convince with your advocacy initiative.

TOOL: Power analysis

One way to understand the stakeholder landscape is conducting a power analysis. This is best done in a participatory process with people who know the issue and the political landscape.

1. List all the stakeholders you can think of who might have some influence or stake in the issue you are addressing: those who are in favour, against, who might be negatively or positively impacted, and those with the power to effect

change. Think about different categories (lawmakers, government departments, religious leaders, influential media outlets, ...) and try to be as precise as possible, focusing on individuals and not just on institutions.
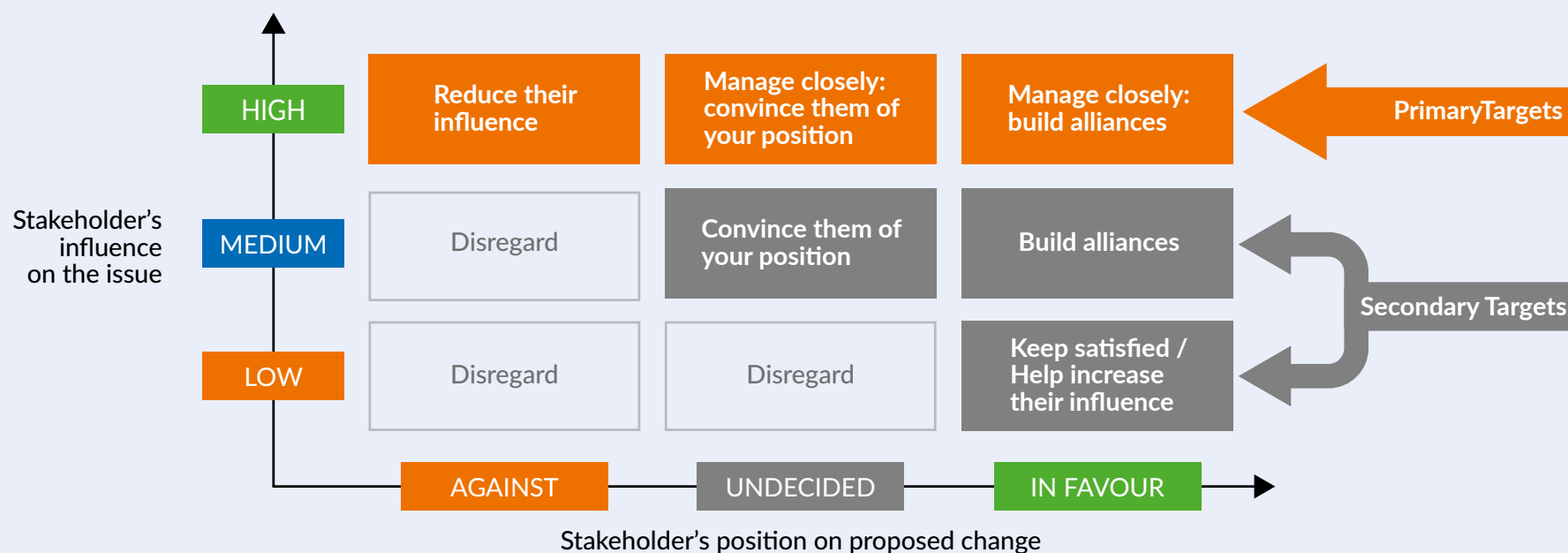
2. Working in small groups, place your stakeholders on the map below according to the influence they have and their position towards the change you are proposing. Discuss this with all participants and come to an agreement on each position.

Influence can take different forms: it could result from formal power (e.g. to propose a law, or to vote on a budget) but also from the capacity to reach many people (e.g. as a media outlet), or from moral authority (e.g. as a religious leader).

3. Each stakeholder's position on the mapping determines your strategy towards them, so this analysis will inform all further steps, starting with the development of your theory of change. The analysis will also help you prioritise what to do with limited time and resources, starting with your primary targets. As you implement your initiative, continue **monitoring and updating** the power analysis to take new developments into account.

If you notice that most stakeholders, including highly influential ones, are clustered in the 'against' corner, ask yourself: is the change objective really achievable or is it unrealistic?

Stakeholder's influence on the issue			
HIGH	Reduce their influence	Manage closely: convince them of your position	Manage closely: build alliances ← **PrimaryTargets**
MEDIUM	Disregard	Convince them of your position	Build alliances ←
LOW	Disregard	Disregard	Keep satisfied / Help increase their influence ← **Secondary Targets**
	AGAINST	**UNDECIDED**	**IN FAVOUR**

Stakeholder's position on proposed change

STEP 3: DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE

In order to implement suitable activities that help reach your change objective, you need a concrete plan. A **theory of change** is a helpful tool for this: it is a statement or a set of statements about the anticipated causal impact of your activities, and how they will lead to your change objective. In order to phrase this theory, you therefore need to think about your **assumptions** on how your intervention will impact a policy process, for instance. It is helpful to do this before implementation because it will help you notice any unrealistic assumptions.

You can develop your theory of change in consultation with relevant stakeholders, or create a draft and then consult others on their perspectives and additions.

1. Start by writing down your change objective (as the final outcome) on a piece of paper, and then think backwards from this objective:

    What are the conditions for this change? What needs to happen in order for this change objective to be realised?

    How can we contribute to creating these conditions?

    Consider your stakeholder mapping and power analysis while doing this exercise: Who needs to be convinced? How can you convince them? Whose influence should you increase or reduce?

2. Discuss this with all participants and turn each set of activities into an **"if X, then Y, because Z"** statement: X is your activity, Y is the intended effect, and Z is the assumption behind this causal statement: Why do you think the change will happen once you do X?

    As you can see from the example (below), these statements make your assumptions more explicit: you might assume, for instance, that policymakers respond to public pressure, or that a certain argument will convince them. Many of the assumptions are about previous obstacles for change, e.g. a lack of political will or a lack of evidence.
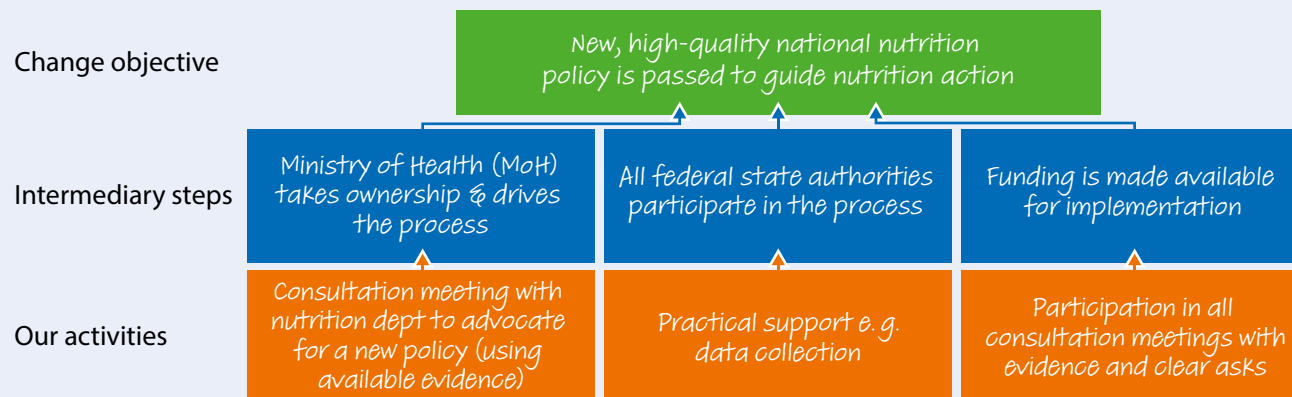
3. Go through the if-then statements as a group and discuss them: Is the underlying assumption realistic – will your activity really lead to the intended change? And can you implement the activity, given your resources and scope? Use these questions to prioritise your activities and to agree on a theory of change.

If we hold a meeting with the MoH's nutrition department where we present evidence on the nutrition situation & the need for a national policy, then the MoH will take ownership of the policy development process, because the nutrition department will be well-equipped to advocate for this issue internally and will be able to draw on civil society support for their arguments. [→ power analysis: increasing the influence of an ally]

If we support data collection about the nutrition situation and policy implementation in the field, then the federal state authorities will participate in the policy process, because this exercise had previously been an obstacle to their willingness to participate. [→ power analysis: convincing undecided stakeholders]

If we participate in the MoH's consultation meetings to present our evidence, then the policy will be appropriately resourced, because policymakers will make better-informed choices and respond to civil society support.

Case Study: Development of a National Nutrition Policy in South Sudan

Change objective	New, high-quality national nutrition policy is passed to guide nutrition action		
Intermediary steps	Ministry of Health (MoH) takes ownership & drives the process	All federal state authorities participate in the process	Funding is made available for implementation
Our activities	Consultation meeting with nutrition dept to advocate for a new policy (using available evidence)	Practical support e. g. data collection	Participation in all consultation meetings with evidence and clear asks

STEP 4: TACTICS

After you have developed your change objective and identified intermediary steps on your way there, it is time to choose and plan your tactics. Some of them might directly result from your theory of change, but it is useful to consider the broad spectrum of advocacy activities and tactics that you can draw on. These can be differentiated according to two dimensions:
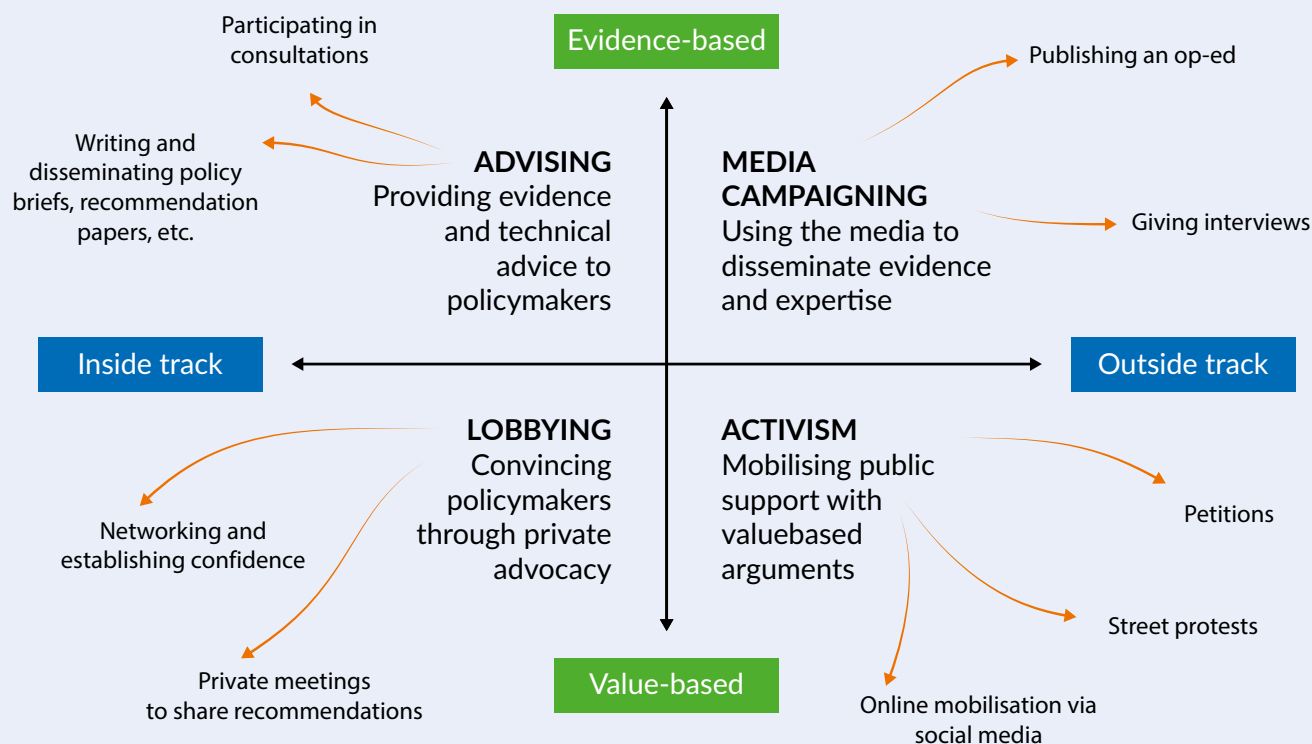
The distinction between these dimensions is not always that clear-cut. In addition, most organisations and initiatives combine several different tactics to achieve their goal: it can be very effective, for instance, to mobilise public support via 'outside' tactics and to leverage this support to convince decisionmakers to listen to you in private meetings.

To decide on your tactics, use the following questions as guidance:

- ⊘ What will be most effective to reach your primary targets (↗ STEP 2 on power analysis)? Are they more likely respond to public support, to sound evidence, or both?

- ⊘ How can you reach your secondary targets? In humanitarian contexts, it might be especially important and constructive to increase the influence of those affected by crisis by amplifying their demands – see below for some examples of community empowerment.

- ⊘ What resources do you have available? Do you have access to high-quality evidence, or the resources to collect it (↗ STEP 5)? Do you have access to a large network of supporters, or good media contacts? If not, do you have the resources to build them?

- ⊘ What risks are associated with each approach? Can you speak publicly about your issue? See box on risk analysis and mitigation on page 14.

The choice of an approach and the specific tactics is highly individual. The case studies below might inspire you regarding some possible combinations and modes of implementation.

Participating in consultations

Evidence-based

Publishing an op-ed

Writing and disseminating policy briefs, recommendation papers, etc.

ADVISING
Providing evidence and technical advice to policymakers

MEDIA CAMPAIGNING
Using the media to disseminate evidence and expertise

Giving interviews

Inside track

Outside track

LOBBYING
Convincing policymakers through private advocacy

ACTIVISM
Mobilising public support with valuebased arguments

Petitions

Networking and establishing confidence

Street protests

Private meetings to share recommendations

Value-based

Online mobilisation via social media

Adapted from Start and Hovland: 2004 and Young and Quinn: 2012.

Case Studies: Advocacy Tactics

Advocating for refugee access to land in Kiryandongo and Adjumani districts, Uganda

Action Against Hunger has been working with refugee communities in Uganda to improve their food security by supporting small-scale agricultural production in settlements. Among one of the challenges faced by refugees is access to land for agricultural production. In 2023, Action Against Hunger organised dialogue sessions between community leaders and relevant government stakeholders (including different levels of local government as well as the Office of the Prime Minister) where community members presented their challenges as well as successes in enhancing self-sufficiency. As a result, the government stakeholders pledged to help organise additional land, making them allies in the advocacy initiative.

Empowering young people to raise awareness on malnutrition in Mayahi, Niger

Mayahi in Maradi region, Niger, is highly affected by acute malnutrition. In addition to implementing lifesaving humanitarian aid, Action Against Hunger conducted the "OxyJeunes" campaign in 2023 to raise public awareness about the issue, to spread advocacy asks and to empower young people to speak out about the problem. Participants first learned about content production for different media (radio, social media, TV) in a workshop. They were then able to put these skills into practice through visits to communities and health facilities, where they produced different media formats to disseminate in the region. Topics included the causes and the treatment of malnutrition. These products were disseminated and shared with local authorities to demonstrate community support and suggestions for improvement.

Training community champions in Borena, Ethiopia

In order to advocate for a continuously improving humanitarian response to complex and protracted crises, Action Against Hunger conducted advocacy trainings for drought-affected communities in Teltele, Borena, Ethiopia. Participants were trained in basic **advocacy skills** such as message development and effective communication, and the trainings were used to identify priority advocacy issues – especially the access to, and quality of service delivery in health centres. In the subsequent months, advocacy opportunities towards local authorities and parliamentarians were created for these trained champions to communicate their asks, for instance community dialogues on international day celebrations.

Sharing evidence at private roundtables

In 2023, Action Against Hunger commissioned two assessment reports on the hunger-climate-conflict nexus to gather evidence on the interrelated causes of malnutrition in humanitarian and protracted crises settings (→ Introduction). The findings included specific recommendations for humanitarian actors, donors and policymakers on improving the nutrition situation. In order to disseminate the findings, we organised a **series of private roundtables** in Germany, Kenya, South Sudan and Somalia where we invited policymakers to react to the findings. Due to the closed nature of the meetings, policymakers could openly share their insights and information about obstacles to change, which informed our future advocacy. In addition, we were able to share more sensitive information about our interventions in humanitarian contexts, offering added value to participants.

! HOW TO: Identify and mitigate risks

Especially when choosing to publicly advocate for an issue as part of 'outside' tactics, it is important to analyse the risks associated with this approach and potentially undertake mitigation measures. Remember to ask other people, e.g. others working in your organisation, about their perspectives.

To conduct a risk analysis, consider the following categories:

» Operational and security risks: e.g. implications for humanitarian access and staff safety.

» Economic: e.g. implications for funding, or loss of implementation capacity as a result of access constraints.

» Reputational and legal: e.g. if false information is publicly shared, or if counter-allegations are made.

Map the identified risks by assessing their likelihood and impact, as shown below. For those risks that are either likely or highly impactful, or both, identify mitigation measures – you might have to adapt your tactics if the risk is too large, but the below examples contain some further ideas.

Type of risk	Details	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation measures
Operational & security	Denial of access to affected communities by government authorities	High	Moderate	» Limit public communications: only along agreed talking lines, or only as part of networks. » Avoid direct criticism of conflict parties, sticking to the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.
Reputational	A street protest organised as part of a campaign is perceived as too confrontational by advocacy targets, leading to a loss of trust.	High	High	Change the framing or timing or the protest, or cancel it and replace by social media mobilisation or a media article.

STEP 5: GATHERING EVIDENCE

Especially if you aim to convince policymakers and the public with facts and expertise, you will need sound evidence to support your arguments.

Many tend to think only of numbers and data when it comes to evidence, but you have a choice of different forms:

	Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Definition	Anything that can be measured or counted, and expressed in numbers.	Descriptive and cannot be counted – it is only expressed in language.
Sources	Surveys, measurements, modelling	Interviews, discussions, observation, open-ended survey questions → Responses usually need to be categorised and summarised to be communicated
Advantages	Delivers the message quickly and efficiently. Often perceived as more reliable (though this depends on the collection and quality of the data).	Useful for demonstrating (complex) causal connections. Can reveal relevant details.
Drawbacks	It can be costly or difficult to collect, especially if you need a large sample.	Takes more time and words to convey. Can be seen as anecdotal: needs to be carefully analysed and summarised to be meaningful.
Examples	Number of people in need of humanitarian aid, rainfall levels, cost of a healthy diet, … *"The number of food-insecure people increased by 60% after the flooding hit."*	What people reported as main concerns or reasons for insecurity, how they described the impact of flooding, … *"One woman in a flood-affected village said that her young plants had been destroyed, leaving her without food in the coming months, also because the nearby market has been closed due to ongoing fighting."*

If you have the time and resources, collecting specific evidence on the issue you are working on can be very helpful: a lack of knowledge is often an obstacle to political change, and revealing how many people are affected can drive change. You can find examples of such evidence collection below. However, in humanitarian contexts and/ or with limited resources, launching your own evidence collection might not be possible. In that case, consider how you can use **existing data and documents** – collected for humanitarian programming – for your advocacy, or how you can make such data collections work for advocacy purposes. Examples include needs assessments, rapid protection assessments, and other surveys that are conducted for humanitarian operations. The same goes for project evaluations, which can contain interesting evidence on interventions that work well and should be scaled up.

Case Studies: Collecting Evidence

Collecting micro-level evidence on the hunger-climate-conflict nexus

In order to better understand the complex drivers of humanitarian needs in protracted crises, Action Against Hunger commissioned two assessment reports on the hunger-climate-conflict nexus in Mali, South Sudan and Somalia (↗ Introduction). A **qualitative approach** was chosen to shed light on the micro-level interactions between conflict and climate impacts, to understand how affected people experience food and nutrition insecurity, and what kind of support they would like to receive. By asking **open-ended questions** about people's situation, their concerns and their food supply, researchers were able to collect rich and detailed data that show how protracted crises cause humanitarian needs, how affected communities are often stuck in a vicious cycle of decreasing resilience, and what coping mechanisms they consider and choose. Through comparison and categorisation, the researchers were able to generalise some results about the complex interplay between climate and conflict impacts, packaging this into infographics for advocacy purposes and presenting it to policymakers at roundtables. But the rich, in-depth data was also suitable for storytelling in the form of short 'graphic novels', which you can see in this toolkit's introduction, and for communications products that centre community's own voices and narratives. → The researchers used a **semi-structured interview** guide, which you can find annexed to one of the reports here.

Anticipating malnutrition via quantitative modelling

Modelling can be one source of quantitative data to support advocacy with an anticipatory mindset. It allows us to flag risks of deteriorating situations and estimate the number of people in need of humanitarian aid several months in advance. ACF's Modelling Early Risk Indicators to Anticipate Malnutrition (MERIAM) initiative is a modelling-based approach to forecast prevalence and caseloads of acute malnutrition. It is currently deployed in four countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan. The predictive model takes into account conflict and climate factors, which are both important determinants of malnutrition outcomes. In addition to informing humanitarian programming, it can be used for advocacy purposes.

Establishing community monitoring and early warning mechanisms

Action Against Hunger has supported the establishment of 'community-led early warning systems' in Mali, Niger and Somalia and in order to improve community resilience to disasters and to enable them to monitor service delivery. The systems are developed with an Early Warning Committee, consisting of community members who are trained to collect and transmit the necessary information. Such systems are highly localised and include traditional and local knowledge about disaster risks and their impacts. In addition to providing early warnings to communities, the information can be used for advocacy purposes, especially towards local and district authorities. In **Mali**, the community-led system resulted in the creation of regular information bulletins that were disseminated among the humanitarian community, but also to authorities. They complement the information collected and disseminated by state services, enabling a more complete picture of community needs.

In **Uganda**, a community monitoring tool was developed to oversee service delivery in health centres, resulting in a detailed questionnaire about staffing, equipment and the quality of service delivery. You can access the tool via this link.

HOW TO: Obtain informed consent ⓘ

For evidence collection that involves affected communities, as well as for communications products, **informed consent** should be obtained in order to preserve people's dignity and address potential safety and security concerns. Firstly, inform the person about the type of data you are collecting and what you will be using it for; and make sure they understand that participation is voluntary. Secondly, ask for their explicit consent to the purposes of data collection. You should ideally get their consent in writing, or, if that is not available, on video. Keep a record of this and make sure no content is shared if consent has not been given.

In addition to asking people if you can use their information, you should also check with a safeguarding/protection advisor whether it is safe to use people's real names and photos, or whether they should be kept anonymous because of safety concerns. Using pseudonyms and drawings instead of photos can be a good alternative solution. Your organisation might have additional guidelines and regulations on this point!

→ Take extra care when interviewing or photographing children, or when publishing information about them. Speak to a safeguarding expert if possible and/or use these **guidelines developed by UNICEF**.

STEP 6: CREATING KEY MESSAGES

Once you have collected or identified suitable evidence, the final step before implementing your advocacy initiative is the development of **key messages**. If you plan to address diverse audiences – e.g. both the general public and decision-makers – you will have to tailor your message to their interests and understanding of the topic. To develop your message, you can follow these steps:

1. **What do you want to change?** Try to be as concise as possible.

2. **Why do you want to change it?** To give clear reasons, you can draw on the evidence you have collected, but you can also refer to values or political and legal frameworks that are relevant to you and your targets. This is where you can tailor your messaging to suit the audience: use a value-based argument for public communications, for instance, and a more evidence-based argument when talking to a technical expert in a ministry. In order to find suitable references that your target will understand, you might need some additional research: what values and frameworks do they often refer to, for instance?

3. **How can it be changed?** The call to action is a key part of your message and should be based on your theory of change. Remember that this ask will look different depending on your target: you might ask a member of parliament to vote on a law, but you might ask the general public to sign a petition or to share something with their network. It's important that the target understands why they should act now, so you might have to give them some additional information on the proposed process: e.g. 'the upcoming policy revision is a key window of opportunity…' or 'the malnutrition crisis will escalate during the upcoming lean season…'.

These are some examples of concise advocacy messages:

" *"Many cases of malnutrition are detected late once they are already severe, as access to regular screenings is challenging in remote areas. Family MUAC can be a lifesaving approach in this regard, as caretakers can monitor the child's status themselves. Studies and project evaluations have shown that it enhances early detection, enabling timely treatment and reducing the caseload of severe malnutrition. Therefore, Family MUAC should be mainstreamed in the new National Nutrition Policy."*

" *"No clean water access point is available nearby, so women and girls have to walk several kilometres to fetch pond water. In neighbouring communities, water scheme restoration led to a reduced caseload of water-borne diseases and improved the situation for girls, enabling them to go to school. As the local government has committed to improving school attendance rates, it should fund a water point in this community to free up the girls' time."*

" *"In Somalia, people reported that they had received early weather information, but their assets had been so depleted from previous displacements that they had no resources left to adapt their agricultural production, leading to food insecurity. In order to prevent a further deterioration of the food security situation, humanitarian donors should make more funding available for the development and implementation of anticipatory action protocols that enable a response to early warnings."*

HOW TO: Tell convincing stories

Storytelling can be a suitable technique for getting people's attention, raising awareness for a problem and its causes, or for showcasing solutions. While it is often used as a marketing instrument, you can adapt it for different advocacy purposes: relatable, authentic stories can inspire people to take action, e.g. to publicly show their support for your initiative; but they can also convince policymakers of the impact of certain interventions or of the need for political change. A story itself will not be the key message of your campaign, but you can use it to underscore your arguments.

Consider these criteria when developing stories for your advocacy initiative:

- ⊘ **Clear and concise** – Think about the essential point you want to convey with the story. Is it about a problem and its causes, or is it about the positive impact of an intervention? Adapt your story structure accordingly: an impact story should feature information about the situation before, the intervention itself and its impacts, for instance. Try to keep it as short as possible by leaving out irrelevant details.

- ⊘ **Authentic** – Draw on real people and real-life information and avoid changing details, unless it is necessary for safety and security reasons (see box about informed consent on p. X). If you change names or places, make sure the reader knows this.

- ⊘ **Ethical and empowering** – Only use the information if informed consent has been given. Avoid reproducing stereotypes about people affected by crises, for instance by depicting them as passive victims. Instead, highlight their agency and draw on their own words to describe the situation where possible.

- ⊘ **Action-oriented** – To suit your advocacy initiative, the story should lead into a call to action that is appropriate for your target audience. This should be coherent with your key message.

- ⊘ **Understandable** – Depending on your target audience: the general public might need some more context information compared to an expert policymaker, who might be interested in technical details.

See ↗ **Annex** for several examples of storytelling about the hunger-climate-conflict nexus, and about project impacts.

STEP 7: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

During and after implementation of your advocacy initiative, do not forget to monitor and evaluate – this will help you stay on track, adjust where necessary and learn for the future.

For **continuous** monitoring, take a look at your **theory of change**: are there any key milestones you can identify, as well as a timeline when certain things need to happen? You can use these to break down your change objective into smaller steps, depicting your activities (according to the tactics you chose) and the expected outcomes at each stage. Schedule monitoring meetings or check-ins according to key milestones, and use them to reflect:

❓ Have you managed to implement the planned activities? If not, what is blocking you and how can you overcome it?

❓ Have the activities had the intended effects – are you on track to reach the intended milestones? If not, reflect whether you might have to adjust your theory of change.

To develop more comprehensive monitoring frameworks, check with a monitoring expert or check the additional references in the annex. For instance, you could develop specific indicators related to your own activities (such as number of policy briefs produced, or number of advocacy meetings organised) or to the outcomes themselves (such as policymakers referring to the solution you are advocating for).

For **evaluation and learning**, keep in mind that you are operating in a complex social and political context – so even if you did not fully achieve your change objective, you can still build on other outcomes. Ongoing changes to the operating environment can make it challenging to reach a previously set objective, or make it obsolete. One approach that accounts for this complexity is outcome harvesting, which focuses on collecting outcomes you observe among other actors (such as policymakers) and collecting information about your contribution. This means you can also account for unpredicted outcomes of your work, focusing on effectiveness and enabling learning.

METHOD: Outcome harvesting

» As you implement your plan, observe and collect any changes in other actors' behaviour (whether originally planned or not) that at least partially result from your work. This could include: policymakers referring to the issue/solution in a speech after you spoke to them; relevant opinion pieces published in newspapers; or other institutions' publications implicitly or explicitly referring to your arguments and data.

» Note these outcomes as specifically as possible, adding evidence if you have any (articles, reports, records of speeches, …). Each 'outcome statement' should answer the following questions:

   » What was done differently? (you can add a more detailed description if necessary)
   » Who did it?
   » When and where did the change take place?
   » Which of your activities contributed to this? Did other factors also contribute?
   » Why is this change relevant for your theory of change?

» Collect and review these outcomes in a collaborative process, for instance a participatory workshop.

For more information on outcome harvesting, visit these resources:

https://outcomeharvesting.net/resources/tools/

https://www.wiego.org/wiego-monitoring-learning-and-evaluation-toolkit/

C.   ANNEX

INFOGRAPHIC ON COMPOUNDING VULNERABILITY

Compounding vulnerability
The combined impacts of conflict and climate on food and nutritional security

Households are managing the presence of non-state armed groups, as well as the impacts of rapid-onset events such as floods and droughts

In South Sudan, the focus of the majority of peoples' concerns was the impact of flooding. While they may not currently be experiencing conflict, past conflict has contributed to their current vulnerability due to losing livestock via cattle raiding and displacement.

In Somalia, drought had already reduced the amount of harvest and, on top of this, people had to contribute some of their harvest as a form of tax to non-state armed groups in control of the area.

In Mali, on top of flood waters affecting the harvest, the presence of armed groups meant that people were afraid to leave their villages and abandoned distant fields to keep livestock close. As in Somalia, households had to provide a share of their harvest to non-state armed groups.

Shocks disrupt the local economy, affecting both primary and secondary livelihood activities. This includes pastoral, agricultural and non-livelihoods

In South Sudan, flood waters affect those who run tea shops and restaurants. These types of businesses rely on people having money to buy goods and services. Flood waters mean it is difficult to get hold of goods, which pushes up the cost of the supplies which these businesses need to function.

In Somalia, ongoing conflict results in the regular closure of markets, preventing the buying and selling of goods.

In Mali, the impact of both climate and conflict shocks is resulting in fewer on- and off-farm jobs. The presence of non-state armed groups mean that some traders went to fewer markets or stopped trading altogether.

Coping mechanisms people use to survive also lead to further vulnerability

In South Sudan, households sell assets such as cattle in order to supplement diets.

In Somalia, households reported taking on more debt in order to buy enough food to survive.

In all three countries, a lack of food meant that households ate less frequently and in reduced amounts. The quality of their diets also deteriorated. At times, adults would not eat so that their children had enough to eat.

The systems the people rely on to cope with conflict and climate shocks are too fragile

These shocks happen within fragile systems (e.g. poor/damaged infrastructure, lack of safety nets, governance). These are the systems which people rely on, or should be able to rely on, in order to cope with the impact of conflict and climate shocks.

This fragility complicates humanitarian needs and the ability to respond to them. Following shocks erode the capacity of these systems further and are also linked to the drivers of conflict.

STORYTELLING EXAMPLES
Facing the hunger-climate-conflict nexus in Somalia

Somalia: Crop reduction undermines livelihoods following drought

"We are farmers, and we used to farm things like maize, beans, tomatoes, and so on; however, as a result of the drought, we relocated here, and now we eat whatever is cheap. We were used to free maize back in the days but now we pay for everything…"

The layering of non-state armed group taxation of farm produce and livestock on top of poor yields was cited by focus group participants as prompting them to relocate to the IDP camps or to urban areas.

On top of poor yields, farmers faced the taxation of farm produce and livestock by non-state armed groups.
This prompted them to leave and relocate to urban areas and IDP camps.

"…where we came from was challenging due to [non-state armed group] control and the fact that they taxed us a significant number of times during the course of the year. They will occasionally tax our produce, but we are powerless to object, and they will also levy taxes on individuals who are building even modest mud homes. On occasion, they will ask people to donate animals, and nobody will be able to refuse."

When deciding to move, they did so at night to avoid detection by non-state armed groups.

"…he or she is likely to come into contact with [non-state armed groups] , particularly in our areas where they have a great deal of influence."

"We were actually the cow that they milk for survival."
Non-state armed groups try to prevent people leaving areas they control, as they do not want to lose revenue due to people moving to government-controlled areas.

"Of course, some people remained there because they were unable to travel here, but some of us were fortunate and travelled in total secrecy while others travelled at night."

This 'graphic novel' illustrates another storytelling approach, focusing on lived experiences. Another example can be found in the ↗ Introduction.

The two following stories are examples of storytelling about project impact. See also .

Farm inputs transforming livelihood in Rabdhure, Somalia

Hawo Ahmed Yarow, a 30-year-old married mother of four from the marginalized Moodin community is so happy with her harvests this winter season. Despite facing obstacles such as floods in the autumn, recurrent droughts previous years, and belonging to the Moodin minority community, which has historically experienced gender and caste-based discrimination, Hawo's determination to overcome food insecurity in her village remained strong.

Her outlook began to shift after receiving support from German Humanitarian Assistance, which provided her with season-appropriate seeds and farm tools, including sorghum, maize, cowpea, and watermelon seeds, as well as storage bags, hoes, and shovels. In addition, she actively participated in agronomic practice training for farmers in her remote village of Washaqo in Rabdhure, which significantly revitalized her livelihood.

During the Deyr autumn planting season in October 2023, Rabdhure experienced severe flooding that washed away most of the crops. Despite this, Hawo's farm remained unscathed. Taking advantage of this fortunate circumstance, she began cultivating four varieties of drought-resistant seeds - maize, sorghum, cowpea, and watermelon - on a 1-acre plot owned by her father-in-law.

To ensure the success of her crops, Hawo implemented several strategies learnt during her training. First, she utilized mulching with dried leaves, which served two purposes: it retains moisture in the soil, providing a more favorable environment for plant growth, and it acts as a natural weed barrier, reducing competition for resources.

In addition to these measures, Hawo took steps to combat pests. She applied Neem fruit juice, which has insecticidal properties and is considered an environmentally friendly alternative to synthetic pesticides.

Furthermore, Hawo implemented flood mitigation measures using the berming technique. By creating a raised barrier along the perimeter of her farm, she reduced the risk of waterlogging and damage to her crops during periods of heavy rainfall or flooding.

Hawo, filled with a sense of empowerment, shared her determination to give back to the community. She vowed to teach her children, friends, and the whole community the same techniques she had used. "I never imagined it would be like this- I will surely continue with the practice and make sure that my children, friends, and community to emulate the same", she said.

With pride, Hawo shared the impressive details of her harvest. Her yield consisted of 125 kilograms of cowpea, 322 kilograms of sorghum, 233 kilograms of maize, and 30 watermelons. This harvest has paved the way for financial stability within her family. Recently, she sold a range of farm produce in the local market, pocketing in a total income of 7,200,000 SOS, equivalent to $288. After deducting cultivation expenses of $96, her net income amounted to $192. She also anticipates earning an additional $108 from the fodder grown on her farm.

Thanks to the training and innovative approaches, such as intercropping farming, imparted by Action Against Hunger with GFFO support, Hawo has emerged as a respected and influential figure within her local cooperative, earning recognition and admiration from her community. By employing traditional farming methods like multi-cropping and natural pesticides, Hawo has achieved remarkable success in cultivating diverse and high-quality crops on her modest 1-acre plot of land. This highlights the importance of training and the utilization of drought-resistant seeds, especially for rural communities in Somalia, particularly in Bakool – a region that has experienced significant impacts from changing climate conditions. Reflecting on the profound impact of this investment, she explains, "It has significantly improved the food security, nutrition, and overall health of my household, while also providing us with financial stability, fodder, seeds, and environmental security."

Uganda, Kiryandongo: Saving lives and fostering well-being

Preterm birth, defined as birth before 37 weeks, is a global problem affecting millions of babies. Many die from complications, while survivors face an increased risk of diseases and disabilities later in life. This calls for interventions to prevent and reduce preterm birth risks. Supported by GFFO, the MAMI *program (management of at-risk mothers and infants under six months)* answers this call, aiming for every child to survive and thrive. It focuses on nutritionally at-risk infants under six months and their mothers.

Kawala Esther's story exemplifies the MAMI program's life-changing impact. Her son, Chandiga Philemon, was born prematurely due to complications during Esther's pregnancy. Lack of access to proper antenatal care left Esther uninformed and without vital medication. "My pregnancy was very difficult," Esther recalls. "From the third month, I had itching, but I dismissed it as sweating. By the sixth month, severe lower abdominal pain and extreme heat set in. Unfortunately, I went into premature labor."

At a nearby clinic, Esther delivered a tiny baby weighing only 1.5kgs. Thankfully, the baby was responsive and willing to feed, with no immediate medical complications. Esther was admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Kiryandongo hospital and enrolled in the MAMI program that is implemented by Action Against Hunger.

Esther received critical support in the NICU, learning to express breast milk for cup-feeding and initiate her baby's suckling reflex. After three weeks of close monitoring, Baby Chandiga showed

Cooking demonstration using local products in Tombouctou, Mali, where conflict is driving food prices. © Sahel Vision

significant improvement and was discharged. They continued receiving support through regular check-ups, counselling, and home visits, promoting family engagement. Today, at 13 months old, Chandiga is a thriving, well-nourished child.

"The MAMI program saved my child's life," Esther says with gratitude. "I had lost hope, but with their support, my son was able to feed and is now healthy, handsome and strong. Now, I can confidently hold

him without worrying stares from the community." The MAMI program empowers mothers like Esther and gives hope to premature babies like Chandiga, ensuring they not only survive but thrive.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Many examples, stories and quotes in this toolkit are based on material developed by ODI for Action Against Hunger as part of two assessment studies on the hunger-climate-conflict nexus in Mali, South Sudan and Somalia. You can find all products here:

» First assessment: lived experiences relating to food and nutrition security in Mali, South Sudan and Somalia

   » Policy Brief on Mali
   » Policy Brief on South Sudan
   » Policy Brief on Somalia

» Second assessment: analysis of existing practitioner and organisational experience in Mali, Somalia and South Sudan

» Synthesis report

Further references:

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Access to diverse and fresh produce is often especially challenging in humanitarian contexts, as people lose access to fields and markets. These vegetables were grown in a refugee settlement in Kyangwali, Uganda.

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Action Against Hunger is a humanitarian and development organization working in 56 countries and supporting more than 21 million people. For 45 years, the Action Against Hunger network has been fighting hunger and malnutrition, creating access to clean water and healthcare. Worldwide, more than 8,000 staff provide emergency aid and support people to build sustainable livelihoods.

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