

# ***BENISHANGUL-GUMUZ REGION***

**Ethiopia**

## ***FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY***

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Asossa***

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BOFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSTC	Community Skill Training Center
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
DPPO	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office
FSDPCO	Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Office
FSDPCD	Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Desk
FSTC	Food Security Technical Committee
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KDC	Kebele Development Committee
masl	meters above sea level
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MOFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
RHB	Regional Health Bureau
SD	Standard Deviation
SNNPRS	Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State
TB	Tuberculosis
VIP	Ventilated Improved Pit
WIBD	Wail International Business Development

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Like for other regions of Ethiopia, food insecurity is one of the main challenges of Benishangul-Gumuz Region. The federal government of Ethiopia has developed a food security strategy to address the issue of food insecurity in the country. Based on this general framework, four regional governments namely, Tigray, Amhara, SNNPRS and Oromiya Regions have developed their own strategies and programs and have already started implementation.

Ensuring food security is one of the priority areas of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State. In fact, it is a main issue clearly indicated in the three-year development plan (2002/03-2004/05). But due to lack of internal capacity and funding, the region has not been able to develop its own strategy and program. As its first attempt, the regional government under the coordination of the then Regional Planning and Economic Development Bureau formed a Technical Committee comprising of multi-disciplinary experts drawn from various regional offices for the development of a regional food security strategy in 2002. However, in the process, the regional government identified its limitation and a need for external support to develop a sound regional Food Security Strategy and Program.

The regional government then approached the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for assistance and reached an agreement for provision of technical assistance. CIDA's support aimed at providing technical support so as to strengthen internal regional capacity to develop its own food security strategy and program. To deliver technical assistance and play a facilitation role in the process of the preparation of the strategy and program documents and capacity building activities, CIDA has commissioned Oxfam Canada working in partnership with WIBD Consult. The regional government also established a Population Settlement and Food Security Office to play the coordination role on food security issues in the region. Moreover, the region approved the formation of Food Security Steering and Technical Committees to support the task. By doing so, the region took initiatives which show its commitment and increases the possibility of sustaining the process and the results in the future.

Since the commencement of this project in August 2003, various efforts were made to build the capacity of the region. Trainings were given to the committees and woreda staff members on various food security related topics. Experience-sharing visits were also made in regions implementing food security programs.

Even though food insecurity is a challenge across all the 20 woredas in the region, it was found necessary to focus on selected woredas first and expand to the remaining areas as experience is gained and as resources become available in future. In view of this, the regional government has selected 7 woredas for food security strategy and program development and implementation. These are: Kurmuk and Sherkolle from Asossa Zone, Sirba Abay and Belo Jiganfof from Kamash Zone and Guba, Mandura and Dibate from Metekel Zone. To facilitate the preparation of the strategy and the envisaged food security program, various participatory assessments were conducted in the region in general and in selected woredas in particular by hiring consultants and involving the regional food security technical committee and woreda staff members. Surveys undertaken in the selected woredas include: Livelihood strategies and natural resource management systems, social dynamism, income generating and market potential, food security baseline survey and ethnoveterinary survey. Technical committee members and selected staff from woreda government offices received adequate training on participatory data collection methodologies before the assessments were carried out.

The present strategy is the outcome of these efforts.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

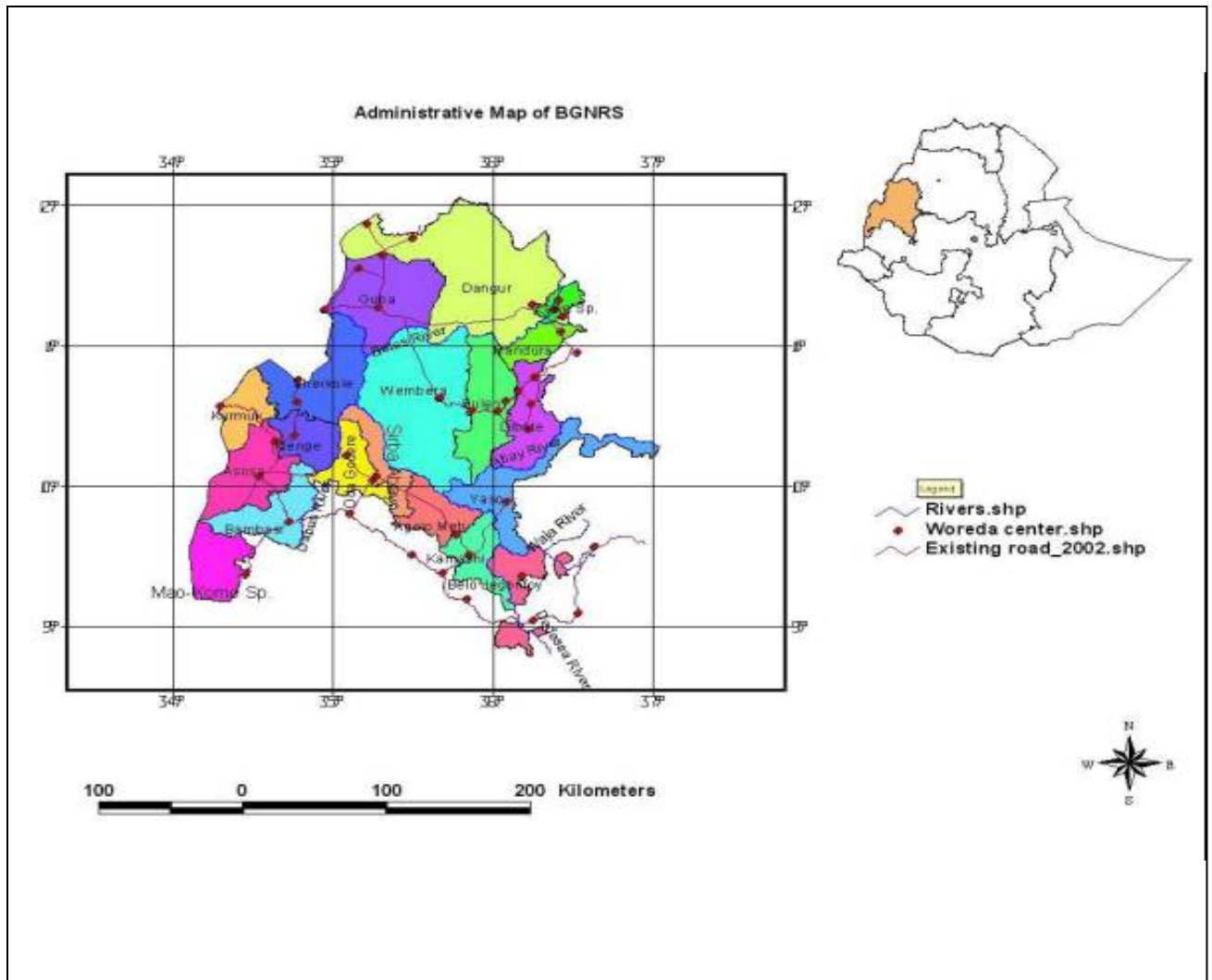
Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State is one of the nine regional states established in 1994 by the new constitution of Ethiopia that created a federal system of governance. The region is located in the western part of the country between 09.17° - 12.06° North latitude and 34.10° - 37.04° East longitude. The region has international boundary with the Sudan in the west and is bordered by the Amhara region in the north and northeast, Oromiya in the southeast and Gambella in the south (See Fig. 1). The regional capital, Asossa is located at a distance of 687 km west of Addis Ababa.

The region has a total area of approximately 50,380 km<sup>2</sup> with altitude ranging from 580 to 2,731 meters above sea level (masl). Agro-ecologically, it is divided into Kolla about 75% (lowlands below 1500 masl), Woina Dega about 24% (midland between 1,500-2,500 masl) and Dega about 1% (highland above 2,500 masl). Annual rainfall varies from 800 to 2000 mm. The temperature reaches a daily maximum of 20°C to 25°C in the rainy season and rises to 35°C to 40°C in the dry season. The hottest period is from February to April. The minimum daily temperatures range from 12°C to 20°C, depending on season and altitude.

Based on CSA abstract of 2003, the total population of the region as of July 2003 is about 580,000 (49.7% female & 50.3% male). This implies a population density of 11.5 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. The average number of family members of a household in the region is 7. Of the total population, 92.2% lives in rural areas and 7.8% is

urban population. The population composition of the region has diverse ethnic groups five of which are indigenous. The indigenous ethnic groups in their order of population number are Berta (26.7%), Gumuz (23.4%), Shinasha (7.0%), Mao (0.6%) and Komo (0.2%). Significant numbers of Amhara (22.2%), Oromo (12.8%) and others (7.1%) also reside in the region. Significant numbers of resettlers brought to the region from various parts of the country as a result of the national resettlement program conducted by the past government are found. The religious affiliation of the population of the region is Muslim (44.1%), Orthodox Christian (34.8%), traditional religions (13.1%), Protestant Christian (5.8%), Catholic (0.5%) and others (1.5%).

**Fig.1 Administrative map of Benishangul-Gumuz Region**



Source: Bureau of Finance and Economic Development

According to the current administrative structure, the region is divided into 20 Woredas that are structured under 3 Administration Zones. The two woredas (Pawe and Mao-Komo) are designated as special Woredas, due to their ethnic composition.

The regional economy depends on agriculture which accounts for 93.2% of the economically active population. Except the Shinasha who are predominantly plow cultivators, shifting cultivation is the major economic activity of the other indigenous population. Shifting cultivation is broadly defined as “any temporally and spatially cyclical agricultural system that involves clearing of land – usually with the assistance of fire – followed by phases of cultivation and fallow periods (Thrupp *et al.*, 1997). The subsidiary livelihood sources include livestock raising, gathering wild foods, fishing, honey production and collection, traditional gold mining, hunting, handicrafts, petty trade and charcoaling.

Benishangul-Gumuz region is endowed with potential natural resources that can be tapped for the well-being of the people. The region has large cultivable land and rich water resource potentials. There are many perennial rivers such as Abay (Blue Nile), Dabus, Beles, Dedessa and others that can be used for large, medium and small scale irrigation developments. It is estimated that there is about 1 million hectare of potentially irrigable land in the region. Rivers like Gilgel Beles and Hoha can be used for hydroelectric power generation. Various types of minerals are found in many places. The major ones include: Gold, Marble, Limestone, Cobalt, Copper, Zinc, Lead, Tantalum, Sulphite and Nedium. About 55% of the total land area of the region is covered with different vegetation and forests. Bamboo, incense and gum trees are the major forest types. Forests are important sources of construction material, fuel wood and food, particularly for the indigenous communities. Beekeeping and fishery are also very promising potentials that could play vital roles in supporting food security in the region.

The agro-ecology of the region is conducive for growing different types of food and cash crops. Sorghum, millet and maize (covering over 70% of the cultivated land) are the most dominant food crops grown in the region followed by finger millet, rice and teff. Oilseeds like sesame, Niger seed and sunflower are grown widely. In addition, pulses, vegetables, fruits, cotton, ginger and fiber crops are grown. Of these, the most important potential cash crops are sesame, cotton, mango and groundnut. Different types of livestock are also raised including cattle, goat, sheep, donkey and poultry. The indigenous knowledge of the people including on natural resource management, is appreciable.

The sharing of international boundary with the Sudan presents unique opportunities to the region for linkage for varied level of trading and commercial purposes across the border. This however, is a potential that has not yet been systematically developed.

Though Benishangul-Gumuz region is blessed with various potentials and opportunities mentioned above, it has remained one of the least developed regions in the country and it is food insecure. There are many factors contributing to this. To begin with, the region was marginalized and was not given due attention by past successive governments. Consequently, the socio-economic conditions are very poor. Crop production and productivity is very limited due to use of rudimentary labor-intensive farm tools, prevalence of crop diseases, pests and weeds, declining soil fertility, inadequate use of improved inputs, erratic rainfall, human diseases such as malaria, poor rural infrastructure facilities like market and road, absence of credit services and poor working culture of the indigenous communities largely due to use of labor-intensive farm tools and low awareness. Despite the availability of huge unexploited agricultural land potential in the region, there is a problem of arable land particularly among the resettlers. Both the size and quality of land that they are currently using is low.

Similarly, livestock production is constrained by many factors and the return obtained from the sector is very low mainly due to livestock diseases particularly trypanosomiasis. There is also shortage of feed and water supply during the dry season. Livestock handling system of the indigenous population is generally poor. Beekeeping and fishery are also not well developed and their contribution to food security is very low thus far.

Degradation of forest resources is increasing at an alarming rate due to various limitations. Encroachment, forest fires, absence of well-defined land use policy, and intensive resettlement programs that took place during the past communist regime are some of the main causes for the depletion of natural resources in the region.

The health status of the communities is in poor condition. Malnutrition is at critical stage. The prevalence of malaria particularly is very serious. Many of the households collect their waters from unclean sources. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is on the increase as well. The status of education is also poor and consequently the majority of the people are illiterate.

Customary traditions in the area do not give due attention to women. There is considerable workload demand on them as they have less access to improved technologies. The culture and traditional role keeps them away from decision making processes. Moreover, women and children are vulnerable to various kinds of harmful traditional practices and customs.

According to the regional authorities, scattered settlement of the indigenous population is also one of the key issues impeding development efforts in the region which require due attention.

The overall effect of the above constraints has kept the region food insecure and in deep-rooted poverty.



## **2. SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE REGION**

### **2.1 FOOD SECURITY SITUATION**

#### **2.1.1 GENERAL**

Despite the availability of huge natural resources potentials and opportunities, the Benishangul-Gumuz region is one of the poorest and most food insecure regions in the country by all standards. This is due particularly to marginalization and isolation from development processes and initiatives in the past. The development efforts in the region during past regimes also greatly marginalized the indigenous people of the region. Moreover, different guerilla wars that took place in the area particularly during the Derg regime and the civil wars in the Sudan aggravated the existing problems. In response to the needs, the current government had planned to undertake rehabilitation programs in the region but very few has so far been implemented. This has aggravated the existing problems. The study conducted by Ministry of Finance and Economic Development shows that the incidence of poverty in the region is 54% (MOFED, 2004), which is one of the highest among the regions in the country. Other studies also show that the region is one of the most vulnerable regions in the country (World Bank, 2003). The wealth ranking exercise conducted based on local criteria during baseline survey (May, 2004) in seven woredas of the region shows the proportion of well-off, medium and poor households as follows: 12.8%, 29.1% and 58.1% respectively (please see Annex 1). The poor category in this analysis of community defines people in a desperate state who don't have any asset and cannot feed themselves from their production.

#### **2.1.2 AGRICULTURE**

The people in the region derive their livelihood from agriculture (cultivation of crops and rearing of livestock), hunting and gathering wild foods. Agriculture accounts for about 93.2% of the people's livelihood.

##### **Crop Production**

Despite the big potential in terms of land availability, amount and duration of rainfall (at regional level), water resources, etc. crop production and productivity is very low. The practice of irrigation is almost negligible. The following are some of the key bottlenecks that impede on production and productivity of crops:

- Use of labor-intensive rudimentary farming tools (shifting hoe cultivation practiced by indigenous people)
- High prevalence of crop diseases, pests (especially termite) and weeds (especially striga), poor storage facilities resulting in high post harvest losses

- Poor working culture of the indigenous communities and high workload on women
- High prevalence of human disease (particularly malaria, which is endemic to the region and draws about 40% of the labor force away from production in a given season)
- Degradation of natural resources including soil fertility depletion fueling deterioration of already meager production
- Poor rural infrastructures (especially roads and markets)
- Lack of market infrastructure and credit facilities
- Erratic nature of rainfall and sometimes weather shocks (affects production as there is absolute dependency on rain-fed agriculture)
- Poor extension services
- Subsistence nature of production

Due to the combined effects of these problems, people in the region especially the indigenous suffer from food deficit both in quantity and quality. The level of food demand and supply analysis conducted during baseline survey for seven woredas (May 2004) shows on average a -13% food gap for all woredas (See Annex 3). However, the intra-woreda disparity in food gap is dramatic as the survey revealed. Four woredas, Sherkole, Kurmuk, Sirba Abay and Guba, which are inhabited by shifting hoe cultivators, are characterized by food gaps of varying degrees. The highest gap was observed in Sherkole (-59%), Kurmuk (-50%) and Guba (-33%). In Sirba Abay woreda the gap was relatively low (-2%). In other three woredas Belo Jiganfoy, Dibate and Mandura, which have natives and non-natives and dominantly plow cultivators, but better infrastructure, the difference is positive. Surprisingly enough these latter woredas are also characterized by high cash income compared to the former. However, this does not mean that people in these woredas are food secure. They are also vulnerable to food deficit due to unsustainable source of income, poor saving and stock building practices, degradation of natural resources, etc.

The survey conducted in Menge woreda by Oxfam GB (2000) pointed that 86.6% of the people in the woreda face food shortage during the food deficit seasons. This figure confirms the facts of Sherkole, Kurmuk and Guba as they are located in proximity to Menge woreda.

The baseline survey (May, 2004) shows that the woredas with large food gap experience food shortage almost year round, but generally the periods from May to September are commonly severe food deficit months for most households in the seven woredas (see Annex 4). The severity increases in June and July and the problem reaches its peak in August. Regarding the severity of the problem during hungry seasons, a respondent in the food system scan (Oct.2003) from Bambesi woreda mentioned that "between June to September the 'mitad' is not put on fire", implying that people do not prepare food due to food scarcity.

## **Livestock Production**

Looking at the grass and bush land potential of the region, one could expect the region to have a high population of livestock and therefore a main livelihood resource in animal husbandry. But the reality is different. The livestock population is very low and the contribution of the sector as a complement to crop production for households is negligible due to killer diseases affecting all types of livestock (especially trypanosomiasis), shortage of water and feed during peak dry seasons, poor livestock husbandry practices and other related factors. Indigenous people are poor in managing the available feed. The depletion of basic livestock assets leads to extreme poverty and vulnerability of households as depicted during ethno veterinary survey (June, 2004). Some of the findings indicate that:

- the direct mortality of animals is generally estimated to in the order of 46% of the cattle herd and 38% of the sheep and goat flocks per annum respectively,
- the losses in live weight due to disease morbidity and other factors have chronic debilitating effects on livestock. In addition, Trypanosomiasis reduces the quantity and quality of raw materials such as meat, hides, skins, etc. Their cumulative effect is almost certainly responsible for economic losses greater than that suffered from mortality from all causes. Among these factors, the widespread distribution of Trypanosomiasis, biting flies, ticks, liver fluke infestations, and the large areas of infestation by tsetse fly are the most important ones.

The survey further shows that some of the interviewed farmers in all seven woredas sold livestock to finance the purchase of medical services for both human and livestock, which accounted for 33% of their expenses. This also greatly contributes to loss of household assets.

The effects of animal diseases are further exacerbated by the shortage of drugs, vaccines, and equipments for their prevention and control. Households interviewed mentioned as problems hindering the utilization of health services as distance to nearest clinic to take the sick animal; unreliability of drug supplies; lack of mobility of clinic staff refusing to come treat animals too sick to travel (lack of adequate resources); acute septicaemic disease that usually kill animals since they can't be taken to a clinic; high cost of drugs. Woreda veterinary workers also share what the farmers said and further indicated the following as some of the key challenges of the service from their perspective:

- Each year drug and vaccine supplies reduce further and the drug supplies given do not always match the request;
- Lack of transport and funds to purchase fuel to get out to meet with farmers;
- The volume of each planned activity is determined more by what budget is expected to be received than by targeting a certain percentage of the livestock population or according to demand;
- No in service or refresher training for many years and no reference books to use in the clinics either;

- Farmers buy illegal/expired drugs from vendors or sometimes antibiotics from human clinics to treat their own animals when they become acutely sick; and
- Farmers who live more than 10 km from clinic tend to use traditional medicines and practices such as superficial branding – many farmers don't understand the value of modern medicines.

Poultry production is also affected by various challenges. Despite this however chickens are still a main source of food and income for the majority. The scale of animal husbandry is at a subsistence level, and the lack of dependable market is also a big problem for the sector. Therefore, the contribution of livestock as a food source or as revenue generation measure and as an asset to buffer shocks is highly limited.

The potential of beekeeping has not been well utilized yet. Mostly indigenous people collect wild honey for home consumption and market. The major problems related to beekeeping are lack of awareness and skill for the community, uncontrolled forest fire and beehives damage by wild animals. The role of fishery to household food security is restricted due to traditional methods of fishing and lack of access to market and other infrastructures.

### **2.1.3 HUNTING AND GATHERING**

Hunting and gathering are traditionally part of the livelihood system of the indigenous communities in the region. It is also practiced as a coping mechanism to fill seasonal food gaps. Most indigenous people in the region have little reluctance to eating wild foods, which offers some potential for ensuring food security in the region. However, since hunting has been declared illegal by the State, hunting is now forbidden. Moreover, most of the wild animals have disappeared or retreated to inaccessible areas due to encroachment on their former territory by agriculture, forest fire or other related factors. Therefore, hunting cannot be considered as a source of livelihood for the future.

Gathering wild foods both for supplementing the regular diet and coping during food deficit seasons is another major activity for the indigenous people in the region. However, availability of these foods is challenged with expansion and intensification of agriculture, deforestation for charcoal making and other factors. Thus, wild foods could not be dependable sources to meet the need for food in the future based on current environmental trends. In some woredas people have already started to rely on products of agriculture alone due to unavailability of wild foods.

#### **2.1.4 INCOME GENERATION**

Even though the region has important income-generation potentials, their contribution to livelihood of households is very limited. Most income-generation activities are geared towards satisfying daily needs (to supplement food gaps). Some of these activities include traditional mining, sale of fuel wood and charcoal, daily labor, pottery and other similar activities. Households also sell food crops, cash crops and livestock to fulfill their cash needs. However, the per capita cash income from both agriculture and off-farm activities is very low. For example, the baseline survey of May 2004 conducted in seven woredas of the region shows that the annual cash income from the sale of both crops, livestock and other off-farm income generation sources is as follows: Sherkole Birr 347 (\$40 USD), Kurmuk Birr 299 (\$ 35 USD), Sirba Abay Birr 537(\$ 62USD), Belo Jiganfoy Birr 1,499 (\$ 173USD), Dibate Birr 755 (\$ 87USD), Mandura Birr 506 (\$59USD) and Guba Birr 169 (\$ 20USD). This is extremely meager to fulfill the cash needs of the households for human and livestock medication, to purchase inputs, to pay government tax and other civic and social obligations.

To fill the gaps created by shortfalls in production the indigenous people largely rely on few income generation activities. However, the viability of these sources is also constrained by many factors. For example, traditional gold mining in most cases require digging of very deep pits, which reach sometimes to the depth of about 10-15 meters. Every bit of soil extracted from these pits is washed carefully and finding of gold depends on the luck. The income from such practice is generally meager to meet the needs of households. Fetching water, drawing soil out of the pit and washing is done by women, which is tedious and energy-intensive. Women sometimes leave newborns at home to go for gold mining; otherwise there will be no food for the family as a whole. Moreover, if location of water point is far from the mining place it adds another burden on women and children. On that basis, the sustainability of gold selling as a means of allowing to get food is under question unless mining & exploration technology is improved, water availability is ensured and alternative income sources are sought.

Selling of fuel wood is also one of the major activities of households to fulfill their food needs. The depletion of soil cover and deterioration of the environment created by this practice makes it detrimental to the sustainability of the region and its productivity. For this reason, fuel wood as an income source is not a viable and sustainable revenue generating strategy: it is too costly in environmental impact and has a detrimental effect on workload of women as it falls under their tasks again to collect wood. As a result, people in the region are moving on closer to becoming dependent on relief aid for their sustenance. For example, from 1995to 2003, an increasing number of people have been designated for relief assistance due to rain failure, failure of harvest by pests and hailstorm (see Annex 2). This trend will continue unless appropriate measures are taken timely.

The income generation potential survey (June, 2004) in seven woredas of the region shows that the indigenous people rely mostly on very few income generation activities, which are extremely labor and energy intensive. For instance, about 95% of the people in Kurmuk and Sherkole and 70% in Sirba Abay depend on traditional gold mining alone. This survey further explains that income generation activities in the region are constrained by the following factors:

- Lack of awareness and knowledge, lack of appropriate technologies and inadequate skills for income generation activities
- Poor market infrastructure: most woredas in the region are connected only by dry-weather roads, no feeder roads which connect rural markets with main roads, market places are not well organized, there is poor market information, no intra-regional market integration (markets in three zones of the region are separated), villages are not connected with woreda markets and the population settlement pattern is very scattered.
- Lack of financial institutions: only one micro finance institution operating in a few woredas, no strong marketing cooperatives, only one government Bank in the region, etc.
- Lack of markets for the products;
- Very low private investment and lack of alternative employment opportunities are some of the major impediments.

Moreover, the indigenous communities are not currently benefiting from jobs created by the existing investments in the region mainly due to lack of appropriate skills of the indigenous people and in some cases due to payment arrangements by investors, which don't respond to immediate needs of people (businesses involved with some products offer pay once exports have been sent and paid for, sometimes up to a year after production).

### **2.1.5 HEALTH, NUTRITION AND EDUCATION**

#### Health and Nutrition

The health status of the households in the region is very poor compared to the other regions in the country. The daily calorie intake (2,100 kcal/day/person) set as national average to determine level of malnutrition is not reached overall in the region, at 1,767 kcal/day/person (MOFED, 2002). The infant and under five mortality rate for the region is 117 and 173 per 1,000 people against the national average 98.6 and 140.1 respectively (MOH, 2003). The maternal mortality rate of 950 per 100,000 live births is also higher than national average (871/100,000 live births) (MOH, 2003; RHB, 2004). The major causes of maternal mortality in the region are: obstructed labor, hemorrhage, sepsis, abortion and eclampsia.

Malaria is a leading cause of morbidity (40%) and a leading cause of death (33%) followed by tuberculosis (25%), pneumonia (7.2%), hypertension (4%),

malnutrition (3.2%) and anemia (2.4%) (RHB, 2004). Malaria has negative effects in the region on all the three aspects of food security (availability, access and utilization). In addition to these diseases the focus group discussants during baseline survey of May 2004 mentioned diarrhea, skin infection, eye infection and internal parasites as serious problem in their area. Most of these diseases are highly linked to the lack of potable water, lack of proper hygiene and sanitation. Information from the Ministry of Health (MOH, 2003) shows that access to excreta disposal is 26.6% (rural 23.3% and urban 59%), whereas access to safe water is only 17% (rural 14.2% and urban 47.7%). The focus group discussants of seven woredas during baseline survey expressed serious shortage of water for both human and livestock consumption. About 26.3% households travel more than two hours a day to fetch water during dry season. Even though there is knowledge about effects of drinking unclean water, it still is common practice.

Nutrition, Protein-Energy Malnutrition (PEM) and Micronutrient deficiencies are the major problems in the region. Information obtained from Ministry of Health (MOH, 2002) shows that the prevalence of chronic malnutrition or stunting (height for-age -2SD) for children under the age of five is 41.3% and acute malnutrition or wasting (weight for-height -2SD) is 14.2% and underweight (weight for-age -2SD) is 42.3%. The survey conducted in Asossa Zone sponsored by Dutch Interchurch Aid (2000) observed higher rate of stunting, wasting and underweight for indigenous Berta communities than the Amhara settlers. The possible reason the survey team forwarded for the difference was that the former has been experiencing malnutrition for longer periods than the latter.

The Body Mass Index (BMI), which shows chronic energy deficiency below 18.5 is at 38.1% in the region (MOH, 2003). Moreover, the study conducted in Asossa woreda among school children shows the prevalence of goiter (due to iodine deficiency) as 71.1% (Wondimu, 2003). Information from the regional health bureau also shows that anemia account for 3.8% of outpatient morbidity and one of the major causes for maternal mortality.

The present trend of HIV/AIDS is also alarming in the region. A study conducted at Assossa hospital (Adugna, et al. 1999) showed the prevalence rate for male at 40.2% and for females at 18.8%. The HIV/AIDS secretariat (2004) report also shows that 14.9% of antenatal health attendants became positive with HIV. The same report shows that almost half of the 599 patients examined at Pawe hospital had become HIV positive. Given the extent of traditional practices in the region, which easily exacerbate HIV transmission, the above figures are highly threatening if all round measures are not taken urgently to curb transmission and infection rates.

The health service coverage (within a 10km radius from a health facility or 2 hours walk) of the region is at 54%. However, the service delivery is generally poor and health coverage for children and mothers is very low. Five woredas out of seven surveyed reported that health service delivery is poor due to shortage of human resources, low supply of essential drugs for common diseases (due to shortage of budget), lack of accessibility, lack of transportation systems. In three woredas, there are no laboratory facilities. The awareness of the local people towards modern medicine is also low. In the effort to increase the number of health personnel in the region, 1 nursing school is launched at Pawe special woreda. In addition to the nurses, about 30 health extension workers are currently on training in the same school.

### Education

The region has 283 primary schools<sup>1</sup>, 23 high schools (including 7 preparatory schools), 2 technical schools, 1 College of teachers' Education and 1 agricultural and vocational college. The total number of students in primary schools is 122,713 (76,619 male & 46,099 female) and in high schools there are 9,252 (6,840 male & 2,412 female) students while technical schools have 453 students. Teacher-student ratio in schools is: 1:48 for 1<sup>st</sup> cycle primary schools, 1:124 for 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle primary schools and 1:107 for high schools signifying shortage of teachers in schools above 1<sup>st</sup> cycle. Total education coverage (gross enrollment) for primary schools in the region currently is 97.9% (116.4% male & 78.4% females) while the net enrollment rate is 74% (83.7% for males & 63.8% for females).<sup>2</sup>

Despite the relatively high education coverage, illiteracy rate in the region is high (82%) because institutional structure is a very recent development and reaches mostly young children. The gender gap in the school system is important at 45.6% , which is in favor of boys. Gross enrolment of the indigenous people is 49% of those registered in schools, yet that includes a high dropout rate of 23% (the rate reaches a high of 40.6% for 1 grade).. The major challenges of education in the region are: low number and quality of teachers, shortage of books, low quality schools, and low enrollment of the indigenous people. Information from the regional bureau of education shows that the major problems related to poor school attendance are: household need of child labor for income generation, low value given to girls education by parents; practice of early marriage; problem of language communication with teachers; distance from schools (due to the scattered nature of settlements) and lack of transportation, etc. To increase school participation of the indigenous communities, the region has established 2 boarding schools at Pawe (for girls) and Kamashi (for boys). Moreover, there are 39 alternative basic education centers run by different NGOs and the regional government and additional 30 new centers are under way as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Primary schools consist of first cycle (Grade 1-4) and second cycle (Grade 5-8) schools

<sup>2</sup> Note that net enrollment rate is the actual proportion of children enrolled out of the total school age children at the beginning of the school year while gross enrollment refers both school age children and overage adults registered.



## **2.1.6 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONDITIONS**

### Gender inequality and Cultural practices

Women in the region are the primary agricultural producers, income earners, and responsible for food preparation and care for the family, yet they are more vulnerable than men for a variety of reasons. They are dominantly illiterate and have neither basic education nor appropriate technical skills. They invariably lack access in their own right to productive assets such as arable land and inputs for production. They do not have opportunities to participate in local decision-making processes and have no access to credit, and to improved technologies. Generally women have been neglected and are not considered in the development process in the region though they comprise 50% of the total population and are the backbone of the family and the community. During the food system scan, community groups among Gumuz defined the poor as “one who does not have wife”, reflecting strongly the importance given to women’s role in development. Yet, women don’t benefit from treatment reflecting this.

Moreover, there are different practices affecting women and gender equity. The main ones are: female genital mutilation/circumcision (particularly among the Bertas and Shinashas); early, exchange and levirate marriages; during child delivery, Gumuz women leave their home and stay a certain distance away and deliver without any one’s assistance sometimes with disastrous consequences; Gumuz women are not allowed to stay at home during menstruation; and abduction and polygamy.

Different types of harmful practices exist in the region, which mostly influence women and children. The major ones include:

- Poor working culture mainly due to use of rudimentary labor-intensive farming tools, culture with an overload of holidays and ceremonies (mourning, funeral, etc.) and low awareness. This refers especially to men.
- Poor saving habit and extravagant expenditures: for example, in Belo Jiganfoy woreda, while people generate high income from sale of sesame, a lot of the revenue is immediately spent on beer. Informants during field assessments said: *“Let alone the Gumuz, even the earth gets drunk at a time of sesame harvest period”*. Too much money is also spent for holidays, mourning, weddings and settling of local disputes.
- Most indigenous people also make scars on their bodies by using sharp materials to symbolize their membership to a certain clan and for beautification, which as a practice can enhance HIV/AIDS transmission as it is handled in very traditional unhygienic ways.
- Food avoidance due to cultural taboos (e.g. some Gumuz people do not consume milk and eggs)

## Conflicts

Although there is generally a relative peace and stability in most areas of the region, local conflict is one of the most important development issues in some woredas such as Dibate and Mandura. Conflicts are mostly between locals and resettlers. Intra clan conflicts are also observed in some areas among the indigenous communities. According to focus group discussions conducted in Dibate woreda, conflict was listed as the number one problem out of 11 major socio-economic problems identified by the community, while in Mandura, conflict is the second most important problem out of 14 key issues in the area. The major causes of conflicts are encroachment, evil eye (witchcraft), abduction, adultery, murder, theft and land. This issue of conflict resolution will need immediate attention as a precondition for any sustainable development and food security.

## Infrastructure

The region is characterized by very poor infrastructure. Most roads are dry-weather roads and hence access is difficult during rainy seasons. Moreover, the road network connecting the region with zones and woredas is very poor. For example, Metekel zone is reached from the regional capital, Asossa by driving through Oromiya and Amhara regions, which is more than 600 kms away. Kebeles are in most cases not connected with woredas. Market network is almost negligible. Only one government Bank at the regional capital serves the region. Telecommunication services are found only in a few woredas of the region. However there are some clear improvements being made with regard to infrastructure, a basic condition to realizing development potentials.

## Population settlement

The settlement pattern of the indigenous communities is highly scattered. The distance between villages within a kebele is important, often meaning hours of walk. This condition makes delivery of services such as health, education, extension services very challenging with meager available resources. It has also become an impediment for mass mobilization, marketing and general development interventions.

## **2.2 INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY SITUATION OF THE REGION**

### ***2.2.1 Enabling Environment***

Different steps have been taken and are underway by the region to create a conducive environment for the development and implementation of a food security program in the region. The region has put all the necessary structures in place and policies, strategies and guidelines (both federal and regional) are

conducive for smooth organizational performance. The following are some of the enabling conditions in the region:

- There is relative peace, stability , good governance and political will in the region for implementation of development programs;
- There are clearly defined development vision and priorities as well as roles and responsibilities at regional, zonal and woreda levels including legislative, judiciary and executive powers;
- The region is willing and committed to ensure food security at household level and towards this end, clearly defined the food security strategy and program . The region is also willing to put in place new organizational structure for food security program implementation. The region also aims to start implementation of food security program with its own budget until viable funding sources are identified for further support;
- The region at present is undertaking a review of existing structures to re-organize institutional arrangement, which focuses on strengthening decentralization and devolution of power to woreda and kebele; utilizing available human and financial resources and effectively and efficiently;
- The region in its three-year strategic plan has clearly identified key development challenges and set priority targets for future interventions;
- There are defined capacity building guidelines for the region;
- The Integrated Rural Development Pilot Program (IRDPP) the region has been implementing for the last two years can offer a learning point for food security program implementation;
- Existing potential in the region (in terms of natural resource endowment and community resources) and enthusiasm of the community to take part in their development destiny;
- Ongoing lobby and advocacy work of the region (forming an alliance group and liaising with donors and NGOs)
- Existing donors supporting the region (Canadian International Development Agency; Italian Cooperation) and the recent visits made to the region by potential donors and partners (US Ambassador to Ethiopia, USAID, Spanish Ambassador to Ethiopia and Pastoral Communication Initiative under UN OCHA Ethiopia). The NGOs working in the region (CISP, CPAR, Oxfam GB, FHI, Mekane Yesus {Central & Western Synod}) and the increase of international NGOs recently coming to work in the region (World Vision , Action Aid Ethiopia, Oxfam Canada and Water Aid) offer new potential for coordinated effort.
- Existing training, Education, Research and Technology Institutes in the region (Management Institute, Agricultural and Technical College, Technology Center, Agricultural Research Institutes, Teachers' and Health Colleges). These are potential resources for technical capacity building in the region. Moreover, the region is also planning to establish regional input and credit supplying institute and farmers training centers (in all woredas).

## **2.2.2 Major Constraints (Bottlenecks)**

### **2.2.2.1 Human Resources**

Along with other resources, skilled and competent staffs are required for effective and efficient organizational performance at all levels. However, the information from regional Capacity Building Coordination Office (July 2004) and the survey on Institutional Capacity Assessment (Nov. 2003) show that the region has severe shortage in skilled human resources as well as the turnover of existing staff is also high. According to the Capacity Building Coordination Office (July 2004), total professional staff needed by line departments at all levels (region, zone and woreda) is 809 people, of which only 379 people (47%) are currently available. The figure becomes worse below the regional level (zone, woreda and kebele levels).

The major reason for such wider gap between staff required and available is related with the reduction of federal government budget due to changes in budget allocation criteria (which focuses on number of population), expansion of woreda structure with decentralization (which required more personnel and financial resources). The shortage of qualified staff is exacerbated by high turnover of existing staff. That is primarily related with the shortage of skilled human resources among indigenous people in the region, who could serve on sustainable basis. Retaining of professionals coming from other regions is becoming challenging. Moreover, capacity building and utilization of staff is constrained by the following: Lack of efficient, inexpensive and tailor made training programs for staff development; Inefficient utilization of existing training and educational institutions; lack of training needs assessment and evaluation of programs and lack of special capacity building programs which enhance the participation of the indigenous people in development

The high turnover of staff affects the region in two ways. First, the exodus of expertise is high, and second, there is no learning mechanism for remaining staff by which trained staff would share and document their knowledge and experience prior to leaving. Besides the shortage of professional staff, lack of experience in guiding, planning, management and coordination among appointees holding key managerial positions at different levels (particularly at woreda levels) has exacerbated the problem. This has contributed to operational inefficiency in many institutions (op cit. 2003). This hindered exchange of ideas and communication based on shared organizational objectives. It was learned during the assessment that staff meetings and other regular meetings in some offices are unheard of. In many instances the plans developed are not discussed, analyzed and compiled in a coherent manner.

Generally, gaps in the area of competence are: lack of experience, poor management and low organizational skills with varied degrees (especially at

woreda levels); Limited capacity in planning, data collection, management and utilization; confusion and misunderstanding about the functional relationships between sector specific offices at different levels of administration (region, zone and woreda); and lack of clarity about government policies and guidelines in some offices. Implication of these gaps in trained human resources both in terms of quality and quantity are obvious. It could be big bottleneck for addressing the development needs of the region and achieving the desired food security implementation.

### **2.2.2.2 Lack of Organizational Integration and Collaboration**

The organizational capabilities of the region are constrained by various factors. The major issues are:

- Poor inter and intra departmental and regional linkage and integration
- Poor information flow between region, woreda and kebele structures;
- Poor communication and collaboration between NGOs and Federal Ministries regarding the region.
- inefficient organizational structure of government institutions (in terms of utilizing human and financial resources) Low emphasis given to kebele level structures in development priorities (weak structures at Kebele levels);
- Limited emphasis given to support the region by government and non-government institutions/organizations;
- Limited participation of communities, NGOs, local organizations and private enterprises in development activities

### **2.2.2.3 Financial and Other Resources**

Budget constraint is one of the major factors that has significantly influenced the planning and designing of development programs and operational activities in the area especially high overhead costs and very low development interventions. The reduction of the region's budget has curtailed operational activities considerably. Until fiscal year 2002, for example, the total annual budget of the region allocated by the Federal government used to be 200 million Birr. This has been however reduced by over 67 million Birr since the 2003 budget year. In addition, the region's annual revenue generation capacity is very low, contributing not more than 10% of its annual budget. Support from federal government and donors is also limited. There is also shortage of basic facilities (including transport) in the region in general and highly severe in woredas. This has reduced the capacity of woredas from delivering required services to the community.

### **2.2.3 Priority Areas and Development Direction of the Region**

To address the problems mentioned above in terms of structure, human resources, finance and organizational capabilities, the strategic direction of the region focuses on the following areas:

- Allocate all necessary resources towards interventions aiming to ensure food security at household level. This includes filling vacant posts, staff development and set up of necessary facilities.
- Review the existing organizational structure and put efficient system which facilitates the effective use of available human, financial and other resources (this is currently ongoing). This helps bring strong integration and to draw lessons from various practices;
- Strengthen the implementation of civil service reform programs at all levels;
- Effective utilization of existing training, education, research and technology institutions for capacity building and technology development
- Strong networking with neighboring regions, donors, NGOs and Federal government;
- Mobilize financial and other resources from the community, federal government, donors, NGOs and private sector. Therefore, the region will embark on strong lobbying, advocacy and liaising with these organizations;
- Strengthen decentralization and devolution of power to woredas and kebeles and build their capacity to enhance bottom up approach of development, which supports mobilization of community for development interventions;
- Establish new institutions which will help the capacity building effort of the region;
- Reduce overhead costs like purchasing (fixed assets), maintenance, fuel and effective use of available budget;
- Training of junior and mid level professionals to deploy at woreda and community levels will be priority area for the region to solve problem of human resources;
- Generally, It is imperative that a number of hindrances/bottlenecks be addressed to enhance the functioning of the various institutions through modifications and adjustments to increase human resources availability, refine coordination strategies/mechanisms, create inter-organizational networking or linkages and intra-organizational cooperation, create or improve inter-regional relationships, etc.

### **3. FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE REGION**

#### **3.1 DEFINITIONS**

Different people and organizations define *food security* differently. But the definition given below is the most widely accepted one which this strategy adopts.

*“Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life.”* (The World Bank 1986)

In practical terms, the definition involves the following key components through which a household or community would attain this security:

- Producing it themselves (Increasing availability)
- Purchasing it (having access)
- Using and safeguarding the food available in a sanitary and efficient manner (increasing utilization)
- Assets are created that can be liquidated in times of stress

Food insecurity is lack of access to a nutritionally adequate diet in a household or community. Food insecurity is divided into categories of transitory and chronic when viewed in terms of time dimension and all of these categories exist in Benishangul-Gumuz region.

*Transitory food insecurity* is a temporary decline in food security that is caused by man made and unusual shocks such as drought, while *chronic food insecurity* is a constant failure to food acquisition commonly perceived as a result of overwhelming poverty indicated by a lack of assets.

#### **3.2 GOAL**

The overall goal of this strategy is to contribute towards attaining household food security and reducing poverty in the region in general.

#### **3.3 EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The expected outcomes of this strategy are:

- a) Increased crop and livestock production and productivity
- b) Improved natural resource management
- c) Improved levels of nutrition and sanitation
- d) Increased women empowerment
- e) Decreased prevalence of malaria, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases
- f) Increased technical capacity at all levels
- g) Increased income and employment opportunities
- h) Increased emergency response capabilities

### **3.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY**

The following are the guiding principles of the strategy.

1. Food security strategy is a dynamic process as opposed to a static outcome and needs frequent revision and renewal (learning by doing).
2. Food security interventions require the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders
3. Food security must be considered in the context of wider/overall framework of basic household needs
4. Indigenous knowledge and practices of the target population are a basis from which to work for improving the food security situation
5. Food security interventions should target both vulnerable and potential areas
6. Participation and empowerment of women is key to attaining food security
7. Improving the working and saving behavior of the households is essential in attaining food security
8. Optimum but sustainable use of natural resources plays a vital role in attaining food security
9. Production practice should not conflict with or undermine future productivity

### **3.5. KEY ISSUES AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY IN THE REGION**

#### **General**

Reports from different bureaus and studies in different woredas in the region show that the key issues affecting food availability, access and utilization are the following: Low production of food at household level; Livestock & crop diseases and pests; Degradation of natural resources; Erratic rainfall and recurrent drought; Limited income and employment opportunities; Poor health and nutrition; women biased cultural practices and lack of capacity, integration and coordination among implementing agencies. Each of this will be discussed below:

#### **Low crop production and Productivity**

The indigenous people in the region practice shifting hoe cultivation, which is labor intensive. Farming tools are highly rudimentary; use of inputs (improved seeds, fertilizers, etc.) is almost non-existent due to lack of purchasing power, lack of awareness and inadequate supply in some instances. Crop diversification is also limited. To compensate the shortcomings of non-productive farming tools,



people usually combine their labor together<sup>3</sup>, which is highly consumptive and has adverse effects in diminishing their food stock. Moreover, labor intensive farming tools discourage people to invest their labor in farming individually, which is said to have to partially contribute to poor working culture of men among indigenous people. Crop diseases and pests are also serious problems in the region contributing to low crop productivity. According to the study conducted in Asossa woreda on the Termite challenge, the aggregate annual crop loss in the field and store from pests is estimated to be about 30-40% (Dutch Interchurch Aid, 2001). As the same study further shows, termite, stalk borer and the storage weevils are serious challenges in Asossa and vertebrate pests like roof rat, field rat and pig also damage crop. Striga, a parasitic weed, is another major problem attacking sorghum, maize and finger millet. Moreover, during food security baseline survey (May 2004), farmers in many woredas of the region also mentioned serious losses of crops by termite and striga. These are further diminishing already meager production and leading the people to vulnerability to food shortage. Therefore, the strategies aiming to address food security in the region should duly consider these problems.

As the region is generally marginalized, efforts made to improve productivity are negligible. The role of research and extension in technology development, multiplication and dissemination is very low. The extension service is further handicapped by poor road network, scattered settlement of indigenous people and shortage of human and financial resources. There has not been emphasis on developing appropriate tools and technology for indigenous systems of farming by existing research institutions and development interventions in general. Technical support given to farming communities is highly limited.

This has generally resulted in low crop production and productivity and increased trend of food insecurity among the people. Therefore, people in the region go hungry from 4 to 6 months annually. Some woredas in border areas (such as Kurmuk and Sherkole) face food shortage for as much as 10 months during normal year. As a result, most indigenous people in the region mostly rely on gathering wild foods, hunting and gold mining to compensate low production of crops. However, the deteriorating trend of these communal assets is leading the people to increased vulnerability. This calls for urgent actions to improve farm tools, strengthening extension and creating strong link with research for technology development.

### **Livestock diseases**

Livestock (goats, cattle, sheep and poultry) are important means of livelihood in the region next to crop production. They are important sources of food, cash income, and assets to buffer shocks. However, the livestock diseases, which are endemic to the region are affecting the food security of the people through direct

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<sup>3</sup> Due to unproductive farming tools people combine their labor, which brings 30-50 people together at a time. This necessitates the preparation of huge amount of food & drinks without which labor pooling will not be possible.

death of animals, reducing market value, sell of crops for animal medication and depleting the people's resistance to shocks during crop failure. Trypanosomiasis is particularly the biggest challenge for rearing cattle in the region. Moreover, poor research and extension in the development and dissemination of livestock production technology, lack of livestock species characterization (suitable for the environment), low skill of the people in animal husbandry<sup>4</sup>, shortage of feed and water aggravate the existing problems. Therefore, all development interventions aiming at ensuring the food security of people should seriously consider the livestock component, particularly the control of disease, livestock extension and market oriented husbandry. This will improve both the nutritional status and income of the people.

### **Erratic Rainfall**

Crop production in the region is absolutely dependant on rain-fed agriculture. The region is generally characterized by high amount of annual rainfall (ranging from 800 to 2000mm) and long duration of rainy months (May to October). The major problem is however, highly erratic nature of rainfall, late onset or early cessation. This situation along with the mono-cropping nature of farming is leading to crop failures in many woredas of the region (as witnessed during food security baseline survey, May 2004). Moreover, lack of irrigation schemes and harvest of existing rain water exacerbates the problem. This affects both crop and livestock production especially in drier border woredas. Therefore, emphasis is given in this strategy to address the problems.

### **Natural resource degradation**

Benishangul-Gumuz region is among the few regions in the country where remnant forest vegetation exist. However, the recent trend shows that the speed of deforestation and degradation of natural resources is alarming. The natural resource degradation in the region is the result of state sponsored resettlement program (during Derg regime), encroaching highland neighbors, spontaneous immigrants<sup>5</sup>, forest fire and absence of well-defined land use policy. Resettlers, encroaching farmers and immigrants are plow cultivators, the practice which requires clearing the plot and uprooting the stumps. Conservation-based farming system of indigenous people is not known to these highlanders. This has left large tracts of farming lands unproductive due to removal of fertile top soil in the area of resettlers and encroachers. The increasing demand for fuel wood (for both home consumption and market) and construction materials are also accelerating the clearance of vegetation. Investment in rain fed agriculture, which took place without appropriate land use plan has also contributed to the degradation of natural resources.

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<sup>7</sup> Cattle among the indigenous people are usually left alone to bush away from home during dry seasons (which may range from 3-4 months)

<sup>5</sup> Spontaneous immigrants are those farmers who come from distant places (as far as Gonder) looking for land for cultivation and grazing, which is observed in Pawi and Mandura Woredas of Metekel Zone.

As a result, soil is exposed to erosion and its fertility is decreasing dramatically resulting in low crop yield per hectare. Due to this resettlers are looking for land and construction materials from native areas, which is leading to local conflict. Soil and water conservation practices are not common in resettlement areas. Increasing deforestation has also affected wildlife, honeybees and gathered wild foods for indigenous people, increasing their vulnerability. According to the estimate of Woody Biomass Project ( in Yohannis 2003), three woredas in the region will be denuded of their shrub land and woodland within the next ten years that is located in potentially arable land. The same source further estimates that about 88% of the region is assumed to have a soil loss rate of 3.1 tons/ha/annum, which is very high under the shallow fertile layer of top soil in the region. The involvement of government organizations in enhancing the management of natural resources is low. The ecology is generally fragile and vulnerable to various disasters. The overall effect of this is reduction of agricultural production thereby increasing vulnerability and worsening the food security situation of the people. Therefore, all development interventions should duly consider the management of natural resources.

### **Limited Income and Employment Opportunities**

The income sources which sustain the life and livelihood of the people are highly limited in the region. This is primarily due to lack of awareness, skill and financial support for income generation activities and lack of alternative employment from private investment. Most existing income generation practices in the region to date are traditional and undiversified, which mostly aim to meet daily needs and consist of traditional gold mining, sell of fuel wood, gathering wild honey, etc. The incomes from these sources are very limited in terms of meeting their cash and food needs of the people. The efforts to improve the awareness and skills of the people on existing practices and other potential sources are very much limited. The improved skills need to be complemented with financial support which creates opportunity to improve quality and marketability of the product. However, access to credit facilities is highly limited in the region (the single regional microfinance institution operates only in few woredas) and involvement of government and NGOs in the area is negligible. Lack of market oriented livestock husbandry and loss of livestock asset due to disease and low emphasis given to the production of cash crops all are contributing to increased vulnerability and food insecurity. In spite of food shortage extravagant consumptions are quite common during peak seasons implying poor saving culture. Too much money is spent for mourning, marriage, labor pull for farming, settling local disputes and alcohol .These issues should be seriously accompanied with income generation interventions. Private investment is very low in the region and its contribution in job creation is limited. Seasonal migration to Sudan, which used to give opportunity for indigenous people, has now gone with border closure.

## **Poor Market and Infrastructure**

Besides the problem of skill and financial resources, income generation activity is constrained primarily by poor rural infrastructure. Most rural villages are not connected either with woreda markets (if any) or other villages due to very poor road network and scattered pattern of settlement. Available market places are highly isolated, no intra regional market integration and there is no market information for products in the region. Only one government bank operates in the region. The northern (Metekel Zone) part of the region is separated from the regional capital in south (Asossa) by Abay River and one has to drive about 800 kms through Oromiya and Amhara regions to arrive at capital of Metekel zone in north. The capacity of existing cooperatives in market promotion and support is highly limited. Therefore, the producers will be forced to sell their produce at very cheap prices which greatly discourages their improvement and expansion of production. Markets are important in two ways: selling the local produce and purchasing the food and other required items at reasonable prices. Hence, all interventions aiming at improving off-farm income should equally give emphasis for marketing of items (improving rural roads and regional, inter-regional and international markets and market information). This will give sustainable option to address food insecurity problem.

## **Poor health and nutrition**

In addition to low production and limited access to additional income sources, the people in the region also suffer from poor health and nutrition. This is mainly caused by poor hygiene & sanitation, micronutrient deficiency, malnutrition and lack of awareness in health and nutrition areas. Due to this majority of population in the region are highly affected by diseases related to this such as: diarrhea, skin infection, eye infection and internal parasites. These diseases reflect shortage of potable water, which covers only 14.2% of rural population in the region.

Moreover, nutritional deficiencies are one of the highest in the country (daily calorie intake is 1,767kcal/day/p, which is below national average). The prevalence of malnutrition among children below the age of five is as follows: chronic malnutrition or stunting (41.3%), acute malnutrition or wasting (14.2%) and underweight (42.3%). The chronic energy deficient mothers (Body Mass Index, BMI) below 18.5 constitute 38.1% in the region, which shows low nutritional status. Nutritional deficiency directly reflects the status of food insecurity. The poor nutritional status is aggravated by high prevalence of malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in the region. Moreover, interventions intending to increase food production have not given due consideration for nutrition, hygiene and sanitation and care needed for infants and pregnant mothers. High illiteracy rate (82%) in the regions makes disease prevention and control difficult. Even if there is increased production, people will continue to be

food insecure without this component and therefore, nutritional vulnerability needs due and urgent actions.

### **Cultural Practices Affecting Women**

Among indigenous people, women are central in the life of household. They are food producers; income earners and care takers for children and the whole family members. They involve in hard labor and work for more than 16 hours in a day, against poor working culture of men. This overstretched time of women affect their health, reduces time needed for care of infants and elders and appropriate preparation of food. There are also many traditional practices that particularly affect women such as female genital mutilation (among Berta and Shinasha people), early, exchange and levirate marriages, polygamy and abduction. The practice of early and exchange marriage denies their participation in education and participation in wider socio-economic development. Moreover, during child delivery, Gumuz women culturally leave their home for forest, where delivery will take place without any assistance. A pregnant woman is also required to reduce intake of nutritious food due to fear of big baby. They are also isolated from the family during menstrual periods. Food avoidance practices due to cultural taboos (avoiding eating eggs and milk among some clans) mostly affect women. The practice of scarification of their body (for beauty and identity), smoking and similar practices affect both men and women. Many cultural practices have adverse effects on health including the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. Therefore, these are one of the focal areas in food security interventions.

### **Limited emergency response capability**

Generally poverty is the underlying cause for vulnerability of people to disaster in the region. The vulnerability of people to natural and man-made disasters is increasing. The region experiences disasters (damage of crops) caused by conflict, rain failure, hailstorm, flood, rat infestation and other similar factors. Even though, these disasters might have been experienced in the past, they have not reached the scale of disaster and people survived through adopting different coping mechanisms without any external assistance. However, since 1993, vulnerability of the people increased and the effect of external shocks has resulted in the provision of food aid. Given the current trend of environmental change, the pace of disaster occurrence seems to increasing and will have adverse effects if appropriate measures are not taken timely. Despite this the capacity of the community and relevant offices in disaster prevention and preparedness is very limited. There is generally poor flow of information, which is partly related with poor infrastructure. Efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations in disaster management are highly limited. Therefore, effective and timely response to the problem needs putting efficient early warning, strong communication and coordination systems in place.

## **Conflict**

Even though there is relative peace and stability in the region both inter and intra ethnic conflicts are frequently occurring in the region. The major causes of inter-ethnic conflicts are mostly related with the encroachment over land resources and generally over the use of natural resources. The influx of government sponsored resettlers during Derg regime, encroachment of neighboring highland farmers and other immigrants to the region has created hostile attitudes between settlers and natives, which ends up in sporadic conflicts in many instances. Moreover, the serious degradation of land resources in the areas of resettlement and encroachment is forcing the resettlers to the native lands which are relatively well preserved, which is again creating mistrust and conflict. Intra-ethnic conflicts are mainly caused by adultery, belief in evil eye, incest, refusal to pay debt, abducting girls, and claims for return or replacement for exchange sisters in marriage (among Gumuz). Once the intra-ethnic clan conflicts emerge and begin claiming lives, the chance of easy resolution remains difficult due to cyclical revengeful actions. It was observed during field survey (May 2004) that lack of security is the prior problem for many people in different woredas (especially in Metekel Zone). During the survey people expressed the impact of conflict on production, marketing, loss of lives and assets, loss of social relationships (like sharecropping, borrowing money, etc).

It also discourages donors and development partners and generally affects sustainable development and food security. Therefore conflict should be seriously considered as part of food security strategy and needs appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms (strategies).

## **Limited Institutional Capacity, Poor Integration and Coordination**

Effective organizational performance depends on availability of human and financial resources and organizational set up. However, the capacity of the region is constrained primarily by shortage of human resources. Available information from the region shows that there is huge gap between skilled human resources required and currently available (available skilled staff is nearly below 50% of required<sup>6</sup>). This is related with high turnover of professional staff, reduction of government budget, expansion of woreda structure with decentralization (which required more personnel and financial resources) and low revenue generation capacity of the region. Poor infrastructure and harsh climatic conditions also discourage staff coming from other areas. Besides the shortage of qualified staff, lack of experience in coordination, planning and management among appointees holding managerial positions (especially at woreda level) has highly affected the organizational performance of the region.

The efforts of capacity building and utilization of existing staffs is constrained by lack of efficient, inexpensive and tailor-made programs for staff development and

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<sup>6</sup> Of the total 809 professional staff required line departments at regional, zonal and woreda level, only 379 (47%) is currently available.

lack of efficient utilization of existing training and educational institutions. Poor integration and collaboration among regional government institutions at all levels is another problem. Some of these include poor intra and inter departmental and organizational linkage, poor information flow between region, zone, woreda and kebele level structures and poor communication and collaboration between NGOs, donors and federal government regarding the region. There are no clear monitoring and evaluation systems as well. This requires clear organizational set up, setting coordination and collaboration mechanisms and identification and implementation of capacity building plans at all levels in the region.

### **3.6 Approaches of the Strategy**

Key problems mentioned above are related to one another and deep rooted in the region, and resolving them will require integrated efforts with full participation of the population and other relevant stakeholders at all levels. However, the experience so far shows that the isolated effort of each sectoral bureau has achieved little in ensuring improvements to the food security situation of the region. As food security is multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral in nature, strong coordination and collaboration is needed among all stakeholders such as line bureaus (regional and woreda), grassroots organizations and households, donors and NGOs. In this regard, the present strategy forwards the areas of intervention by putting strong and coordinated mechanisms in place including monitoring and evaluation systems. As part of this direction, a new organizational structure is proposed for food security coordination office. The strategy also emphasizes the need for capacity building and technical assistance at all levels of the structure.

The current strategy also focuses on building on the existing indigenous knowledge and practices in all aspects and participatory research is needed as a key take-off point to improve the existing skills, tools and technologies. It is believed that this can make the efforts more practical and sustainable. One of the issues worth mentioning here is shifting cultivation, which is the dominant farming practice for the indigenous communities in the region. There is a debate about the value of this practice among development practitioners and whether to include it as a strategy for future development processes. Those who favor the practice strongly argue that it is more environmentally friendly than plow cultivation in areas like Benishangul-Gumuz where the ecosystem is very fragile. They also acknowledge this farming system as a way of sustaining the life and livelihood of the people and retaining biodiversity in the region. They substantiate this view by showing cases of biodiversity destruction in settlement areas in the region. On the other hand, detractors argue that though the practice is sound to the environment it is one of the key causes for low production and productivity because it entails use of labor intensive hand tools and hence could not meet the food requirements of the growing population of the region. They also say that shifting cultivation destroys beneficial plant and wild life while burning and clearing of forests, decreases labor productivity, encourages scattered settlement

and creates air pollution due to frequent burning of forests. However, this strategy recognizes the practice as a farming system and build on it through use of improved technologies and training of farmers. Further participatory research is proposed to scrutinize tools and technologies which are appropriate for this type of ecology.

Villagization is another important issue that will deserve due attention in attaining food security in the region. According to the regional government, villagization is one of the regional development priorities. This strategy encourages need based collectivization of people to well-chosen and positioned development centers within given Kebeles. The process should take place on a participatory basis and take the environmental, social and cultural realities of the region into consideration. The change will be made voluntarily and step by step. In it imperative that social services and infrastructures be put in place first. It is also proposed to draw appropriate lessons from the settlement site established by the Derg regime in the region.

The strategy strongly proposes the need for the empowerment of grassroots communities through organizing for development activities and delivering required technical and financial supports to ensure food security and community driven development in general. Special emphasis will also be given in developing key local potentials to improve the life of the people.

It is recognized in this strategy that the depletion of household and community assets is a major challenge in the region. In view of this, the strategy presents a general direction to mitigate the sources of vulnerability such as crop pests, weeds and diseases, livestock disease, malaria and rain failure, in order to build the capacity of households to resist shocks.

Lack of access roads, markets and marketing infrastructure are big bottlenecks to food security in the region. In this regard, due emphasis is given in the strategy to improve rural roads and the cooperatives system.

The role of women in food security in the context of this region is pivotal. Women are involved in every aspect of food production and processing and have an excessive burden in discharging their responsibilities. It is therefore fundamental that emphasis be given to incorporate the gender perspective in all components of the strategy.

Malaria, HIV/AIDS and environment affect all food security intervention endeavors. They are basically depleting the household and community assets and they will continue to be challenging future efforts. This strategy recognizes that basic health is a condition of improving and attaining food security at the household and community level, and it considers any food security related interventions will need to take these issues into consideration.



### **3.7 COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGY**

As shown in the above sections, the causes of food insecurity in Benishangul-Gumuz region are diverse and all the three aspects of food security (availability, access and utilization) face problems. These multi-dimensional problems can only be overcome by addressing all food security components in an integrated manner: increasing food availability, increasing and improving access to food at all times and addressing improvements needed in food utilization for targeted households. Along with this, enhancing preventive and curative programs against malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, villagization and building emergency response capabilities of households will be taken into account by this strategy.

#### **I. Increasing Food Availability**

Food availability in the region can be increased by helping rural households to produce their own food and meet their food needs, and supporting their asset building so as to increase their purchase power for food they don't produce. Improving crop and animal production will play a vital role in increasing availability of food thereby contributing to food security. The following strategies are proposed to achieve this.

1. Increasing food crops production and productivity
  - 1.1 Promote diversification and intensification of food and cash crops production through improving existing farm tools and introduction of appropriate technologies and improved seeds (that are high yielding, pest resistant and adaptable); improving agronomic practices, use of integrated pest management (IPM), use of organic and inorganic fertilizers and promotion of home gardening. Local seeds having useful characteristics will be studied and promoted.

Diversification of crops enables farmers to get sufficient options. Therefore, diversification will be promoted through strengthening of home gardening (potential for production of different types of vegetables and fruits). This reduces risks that arise from mono cropping and also improves the nutrition status of households.

- 1.2 Enhance intensive research on shifting cultivation through participatory methods to develop and test out appropriate technologies for different agro-ecologies.
- 1.3 In drought prone and moisture deficit areas, the focus will be on promoting moisture conservation and utilization by using community-based water harvesting techniques, small scale-irrigation, in-situ moisture conservation and introduction of drought resistant and early maturing crop varieties

- 1.4 Strengthen crop production extension services through:
  - Promoting and strengthening research-extension-farmer linkage
  - Conducting on-farm demonstrations and verification trials (with farmers participation) for new crops and technologies introduced before disseminating them to farmers.
  - Improving supply of agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, technologies, etc) through establishment of farmer based seed and technology multiplication and dissemination centers, cooperatives and by encouraging the private sector to get involved in the business.
  - Delivering tailor-made training programs to farmers, extension agents and other government staff working at grassroots levels on different crop production techniques and provide other relevant supports. Farmer to farmer information sharing and experience-sharing will also be enhanced.
  - Using of traditional communication systems and creating strong networking among Kebele development committees for dissemination of information and technologies
  - Strengthening farmers training centers and building the working capacity of the rural technology center and other relevant institutions through technical and financial supports
  
2. Strengthen and promote natural resource management by building on indigenous knowledge, promoting community based land use planning, biological and physical soil and water conservation practices and use of alternative energy saving and construction technologies thereby reducing the rate of deforestation. Along with this, efforts will be made to promote culturally adaptable agro-forestry technologies to conserve the fragile-ecosystem, minimize future environmental damage and conserve the genetic diversity of flora and fauna. This will be done through awareness creation, establishment of community based demonstration trials and nurseries, and provision of other required supports. Appropriate measures will be taken to initiate environmental education and promote wise use of natural resources as integral parts of all development activities.
  
3. Promote and encourage identification and exploitation of wild foods by conducting participatory research on handling, utilization, nutrition content and their marketability
  
4. Increasing animal production and productivity through:
  - 4.1 Enhancing animal husbandry in management of available feed, promoting forage and fodder crops production, improved livestock management practices and by establishing water points in areas where water is scarce

- 4.2 Promoting livestock diversification by supporting market oriented production system and introducing productivity enhancing technologies
- 4.3 Promoting animal diseases prevention and control programs by:
  - Establishing of community based animal health services delivery systems
  - Encouraging private sector animal health service providers through formulation of clear regional policy guideline and legislation and other relevant supports
  - Enhancing small-scale tse tse fly control programs in selected areas
  - Organization of ethno-veterinary practitioners at the grassroots levels to establish traditional livestock health practitioners directory and initiate participatory conservation and utilization of medicinal plant diversity. Training will be provided to them to upgrade their skills.
  - Undertaking a comprehensive ethno-veterinary study and validation of the outcome and ways of integrating the practice with conventional animal health services.
- 4.4 Promoting and strengthening livestock extension services by:
  - Promoting and reinforcing research-extension-farmer linkage
  - Delivering tailor-made training programs to farmers and extension agents and other government staff working at grassroots levels on different animal production techniques and organizing experience-sharing visits as well as other necessary follow-up supports
  - Reinforcing the existing structure of Kebele development committees
  - Using traditional communication systems and creating strong networking among Kebele development committees for dissemination of information and technologies
  - Improving the supply of inputs (forage seeds, poultry, beehives, fishing nets, and other appropriate technologies) through establishment of farmer based technology multiplication and dissemination centers and assisting the private sector to get involved in the business. Establishment of small scale poultry brooding center will also be promoted.
  - Strengthening farmers' training centers by providing necessary technical and financial support.
- 4.5 Promoting the collection of data regarding characterization and documentation of breed, species and type of livestock well adapted to the region
5. Specialization of crop and livestock production will be encouraged based the context of target area potential, market demand and other conditions
6. Strengthening agricultural research centers by providing appropriate supports

7. Improving marketing infrastructures and providing credit for both men and women farmers. Encourage cooperatives for better marketing of products.
8. Introducing appropriate technologies for reducing both the time and workload of women associated with traditional technologies and practices. Providing women with information and developing their skills in ways that encourage the development and utilization of indigenous resources. Efforts will also be made to increase women's involvement in decision-making processes through broadening their participation in formal and informal organizations

## **II. Increasing Access to Food**

Supporting the generation of sufficient and sustainable income by broadening the economic base of households is vital to reducing food insecurity and vulnerability. This can be achieved by raising the income of food insecure households. Once households earn a stable income they can purchase or access the food they need and can better meet their food needs. This can also lead to building further their assets, which provides insurance to buffer shocks. Proposed strategies for consideration in increasing access to food are given below.

1. Diversify and promote income sources of revenues and employment opportunities such as gold mining, handicrafts, incense and gum collection by providing appropriate skills training for both men and women on the production and marketing of products. Private investment will also be sought to create sustainable income and employment opportunities
2. Promoting market oriented animal production such as poultry, goat, sheep, cattle, fish and beekeeping to increase income and asset creation. Promoting the marketability of animal byproducts to ensure opportunities for additional income.
3. Promoting production of market oriented cash crops like oil seeds and other crops through providing appropriate extension services and credit facilities. Strategies will be developed for the marketing of these products at national and international levels.
4. Promoting establishment of rural market centers and towns in strategic locations
5. Enhancing building of labor-intensive and RR10 roads and other rural infrastructure; promoting donkey transportation, use of carts and other

transportation facilities; and increasing accessibility to market and marketing of products.

6. Creating awareness on importance of saving and promoting establishment of rural credit and saving cooperatives, micro-finance institutions and local saving schemes
7. Strengthening, establishing and promoting cooperatives at primary and union levels for marketing and credit services
8. Expanding capacity of local oil pressing and other initiatives and promote establishment of other agro-processing facilities through providing training, technology and other necessary supports
9. Promote and encourage legalized cross-border trade by promoting products having comparative advantage
10. Encourage households to build assets through awareness creation and delivery of necessary supports
11. Promote training and capacity building to improve skills, knowledge and technologies for increasing income by strengthening the existing Community Skill Training Centers (CSTC) and establishing new ones as appropriate. Strengthen the CSTC through material support and upgrade the skills of trainers. In addition, establishment of Regional Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency (REMSEDA) will be promoted.
12. Enhance women's economic influence by increasing their participation on income generating activities that focus on petty trade, small ruminants, pottery, etc. To effectively implement this strategy there is a need to increase participation of women on relevant skill training, provide credit and create awareness on both men and women to jointly decide on the resources earned. This needs freeing of women's time for income generation through adoption of appropriate labor saving technologies.
13. Promotion of eco-tourism centers for employment generation through appropriate land use planning and encouraging private sector's involvement

### **III. Improving Food Utilization and Care**

Once food is produced or purchased, it should be utilized appropriately. Otherwise, adequate access to food by itself does not guarantee adequate nutrition unless it is linked to improved health care, nutritional education and safe water supplies. Poor standards of health and nutrition reduce productivity and increase the susceptibility of people to serious diseases thereby affecting food

security. The proposed strategies to improve food utilization and care in the region are:

1. Ensuring adequate nutrition by:
  - diversification of adequate food and control of infectious diseases (viral, bacterial and parasitic); improving micro-nutrient supplies by growing vegetables and fruits, supplying iodized salt, capsules and Vitamin "A" supplementation and awareness creation and promoting consumption of fishery and forestry products
  - Promoting food processing, preservation techniques and better eating habits. Education on nutrition and food will also be enhanced by promoting girls education, making information accessible, education and communication (IEC) materials distribution, extension staff, schools and local formal and informal organizations
  - Reducing the burden of women's reproduction through awareness creation for both women and men, providing family planning services (to increase the age at which women begin to have children and lengthening the time intervals between births) and creating strong networking among Kebele development committees for dissemination of information and other materials
  
2. Improving access to safe water supplies and sanitation through:
  - Developing safe, reliable and conveniently located sources of drinking water through community participation
  - Promoting environmental and personal hygiene and sanitation through awareness creation and infrastructure: ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrine construction. Effort will also be made to enforcing the regional rules and regulations on environmental hygiene and sanitation and promoting sanitation and hygiene education through local organizations, distribution of IEC materials and other means
  
3. Improving preventive and curative health services by
  - Promoting and strengthening health extension services and building the capacity of community health agents (CHAs), traditional birth attendants (TBAs), home agents, etc. through training and material support, community mobilization and awareness creation
  - Promote preventive and curative health care through existing health facilities and health extension services by raising awareness of the community to utilize the resources
  - Promote village based mother and child care through education and support.
  
4. Promote a comprehensive traditional medicine inventory and study, validate the outcome and identify ways of integrating the traditional practice with conventional health service delivery systems.

5. Expand participation of indigenous communities in education by supporting adult non-formal and alternative basic education, encouraging girls' participation in schools, building awareness and giving other appropriate supports.
6. Reduce post-harvest losses by raising awareness of the households, promoting IPM to control storage pests, diseases, and rodents, enhancing use of improved granaries and better food storage facilities and improving preservation and storage of fruits and vegetables to reduce waste, post-harvest losses and effects of seasonality.
7. Reduce harmful traditional practices (HTP) through awareness creation, increasing girls' participation in schools, advocacy, strengthening community based organizations and enforcing the law
8. Introducing appropriate technologies for reducing both the time and workload of women associated with traditional technologies and practices; Efforts will also be made to increase women's involvement in decision-making processes through broadening their participation in formal and informal organizations; promote access and control over resources

#### **IV. Enhancing malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS prevention and control programs**

Malaria, tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS affect the productive workforce of the people at large and restrict food availability, access and utilization while further exacerbating food insecurity and poverty. This strategy proposes the following interventions to control and prevent these diseases.

- Reinforce community based malaria, TB and other communicable diseases prevention and control programs through awareness creation and health education, community mobilization, using mother promoters and providing other essential supports
- Promote preventative measures against HIV/AIDS and increase care for victims through awareness creation, school clubs formation, distribution of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, Kebele Development Committee networks, religious institutions, women groups and other relevant supports
- Mainstream these issues in all food security components

## **V. Promote good working culture**

Traditional work habits in the Region are not conducive to increasing general productivity and functionality across the board. In order to systemically address root causes of food insecurity, there will be a need to define strategies to encourage a shift in work culture. The strategies for promoting good working culture are:

- Enhancing the awareness of the people
- Providing incentives to model farmers
- Organizing experience-sharing visits
- Introducing labor saving technologies to encourage individual farmers

## **VI. Promote community-based conflict resolution initiatives**

Conflicts have a important impact on the collective productivity of people and on the basic security status that is a pre-condition to production, diversification of livelihood sources, marketing and utilization (availability, access, use)

The strategies proposed to minimize risks of conflicts are:

- Enhancing the awareness of the community on the importance of peace and stability for sustainable development through meetings and trainings
- Strengthening traditional and cultural conflict resolution mechanisms through awareness creation, delivering technical support and supporting the networking of community organizations
- Strengthening the security/justice committee from woreda to Kebele levels through providing appropriate training and other necessary supports
- Enforcing the appropriate law
- Strengthening the social court at Kebele level

## **VII. Promote and Encourage Voluntary Villagization**

The scattered structure of settlements of people influences negatively the efficiency of service delivery, information sharing, communications, access and transportation, marketability of products and services. In order to reduce these negative impacts while encouraging growth and access to services, information, knowledge and infrastructure, the following strategies are important:

- Undertake studies on villagization and promote identification of development centers/growth areas through community participation
- Undertake pilot programs within the Region so as to demonstrate and better assess the potential adaptation to villagization models



## **VIII. Building Emergency Response Capabilities**

The outbreak of emergencies or disasters affect livelihoods and households in a way that makes it often impossible for them to preserve few assets they have, or rely on alternative sources of income and food, making the whole community extremely vulnerable, and more prone to poverty, conflict, health deterioration and food insecurity. System for warning of potential emergencies, as well as mechanisms and capacity for response, should be reinforced.

The strategies for increasing emergency response capabilities are:

- Promoting coping mechanisms that do not affect future production and productivity by encouraging existing social support systems
- Strengthening early warning and preparedness capability through training farmers on early warning principles; promoting good networking and supplying relevant materials to woredas and Kebeles for timely flow of information
- Promote preparedness capability through building local stocks and accumulation of food and non-food items at strategic locations.
- Enhancing employment generation schemes and a productive safety net mechanism in major vulnerable areas

## **IX. Building Institutional Capacity**

The strategies proposed to build the institutional capacity of the region are given below:

- Strengthen organizational capacity in skilled human resources by:
  - Effectively utilizing available training and education institutions in the region
  - Recruiting professional staffs for key vacant posts and providing targeted in-service training programs to the existing staff at all levels
  - In cooperation with regional management institute, improve the capacity (knowledge and skills) of the appointed management members by providing appropriate and tailor made training programs.
  - Design special capacity building program to improve involvement of indigenous people in development and devise mechanisms for providing incentives to retain professional staff;
  - Enhance the capacity of existing training and education institutions through providing all appropriate supports. Establish and strengthen other institutions (Input and credit supplying institute and farmers training centers) and others as appropriate.
- Strengthen the Alliance Group to improve linkage with Federal government and donors so as to provide proper and adequate representation of the region's socio-economic, cultural and development profile, lobbying for resources, help the region network with other

institutions working in development issues in general and food security in particular.

- Scrutinize strong partnership with relevant NGOs and/or donors for support in capacity building through facilitating human resource development, action research, networking with other organizations and sharing of best practices regionally, nationally and internationally.
  
- Establish effective management, coordination and organizational systems by:
  - Implementing the civil service reform at all levels; put transparent and efficient system for all government offices at all levels
  - creating system for collection, organization, utilization and exchange of information to enhance effective integration among all stakeholders
  
- Strengthen decentralization and build the implementation capacity of woredas; identify the limitations of the existing organizational structure of implementing offices and take appropriate measures accordingly.

## **4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

### **4.1 GENERAL**

It is about a year and half (mid-2003) since the Population Settlement and Food Security office has been established in Benishangul Gumuz region. As food security is multi-sectoral in its nature, there should be clearly defined roles, responsibilities and functional systems among institutions involved in food security interventions. However, there are no clearly defined mechanisms put in place for collaboration between line bureaus, donors, NGOs and the private sector. Moreover, the communication line of the food security office with woreda food security desks and target Kebeles remains unclear.

The functional roles of the office on project appraisal, funding, project progress monitoring and evaluation systems are not clearly determined yet. The office does not have clear strategies for capacity building at different levels. It also appears that the office has overlapping roles with Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office (DPPO), which may jeopardize its future performance and efficiency. This will be a big challenge for the implementation of forthcoming food security program. Therefore, as part of the food security strategy, the new proposed institutional arrangement and structure which clearly defines coordination and collaboration mechanisms, roles and responsibilities of collaborating agencies and functional systems is described below. The new institutional arrangement is proposed to:

1. Create enabling and smooth working relationship among line bureaus, woreda sector offices, grassroots communities, bilateral and multilateral organizations, NGOs and private sector
2. Promote transparent and efficient system of communication for effective monitoring and evaluation of the progresses and achievements,
3. Avoid unnecessary conflicts among the collaborating agencies resulting from unclear roles and responsibilities,
4. To clearly identify capacity building needs for implementing agencies and grassroots communities
5. To streamline and simplify organizational structure, ease decision-making and encourage more efficiency
6. Address felt-needs of the community

### **4.2 PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The new structure is proposed for three different levels: regional, woreda and community.

## **4.2.1 Regional**

At the regional level, the Food Security Steering committee and Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Office will play a key role in the overall coordination and execution of food security interventions. Their roles and responsibilities will be the following:

### **4.2.1.1 Food Security Steering Committee**

The higher level of the structure is regional food security steering committee, which is composed of heads of line bureaus and the rural development advisor and finance and planning advisor of the regional president. This committee is accountable to the regional council and has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Reviews strategic plan of the Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Office (FSDPCO)
- Reviews annual budget of the office and endorses for approval
- Approves food security project finances of Birr > 50,000
- Approves the allocation of food security project funds for woredas,
- Evaluates the progresses of the food security programs and gives policy direction

### **4.2.1.2 Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Office (FSDPCO)**

Due to their overlapping roles this strategy proposes the unification of Population Settlement and Food Security Office and Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office (please see the proposed structure, Annex 5). The new office will have two main departments, namely Food Security coordination department and Disaster Prevention and Preparedness department.

The new office will be accountable to the Rural Development Coordination Office for administration purposes and serve as a secretary of the steering committee for program coordination. The office will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- coordinates executing agencies for the preparation of project proposals and implementation of food security projects
- solicits funds and other resources for food security and disaster prevention programs
- manages funds and other resources of food security and disaster prevention program,
- approves project proposals submitted from executing organizations for funding (line bureaus and woreda offices),
- disburses funds for projects
- audits project funds, settles advances, and reports utilization for government and donors,

- monitors and follows-up project progresses and prepares reports for steering committee and funding agencies,
- establish partnership and networking with donors, NGOs and government organizations
- conducts/commissions research and study on food security and disaster mitigation,
- executes or supports capacity building, planning, and information systems activities,
- liaise with, follows-up, and evaluates NGOs projects in the region
- together with regional task force, asses the population resettlement needs, plans it, and coordinates the implementation of resettlement program,
- collects and disseminates data and information of early warning and disasters,
- assesses relief needs in period of disaster and distributes relief foods and materials for the affected households in line with the policies of DPPO.

## **4.2.2 Woreda**

### **4.2.2.1 Woreda Steering Committee**

The higher body at woreda level will be the woreda steering committee, which will be composed of heads of line offices/desks involved in food security interventions (see the structure, Annex 6). The committee will be accountable to woreda council and will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- a) Endorses annual plans and budget of the woreda food security and disaster prevention desk for approval,
- b) Approves project finances/proposals of Birr less than 50,000
- c) Allocates project funds for target Kebeles in the woreda,
- d) Follows-up and evaluates progresses of the food security programs in target Kebele, and
- e) Monitors relief aid programs and gives recommendations on disaster mitigation in the woreda.

### **4.2.2.2 Woreda Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Desk (FSDPCD)**

The woreda food security desk and disaster prevention desks are proposed to be unified in the same line with regional office. Accordingly, the woreda food security and disaster prevention coordination office will be accountable to the woreda rural development coordination office for administrative purposes and serve as secretary for the steering committee for food security program coordination. The office will have the following specific roles and responsibilities:

- 1) Follows-up and coordinates the implementation of food security and relief programs in the woreda

- 2) Coordinates woreda line offices and desks for the preparation of project proposals and submits the proposals to the Regional Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Office for appraisal,
- 3) Creates awareness and facilitates training for Kebele Development Committee (KDC) members and woreda line offices on food security programs, project planning, execution, monitoring, fund utilization, targeting, reporting, etc.
- 4) Prepares project progress and funds utilization reports and submits them to the regional FSDPCO
- 5) Collects data and information of early-warning, disasters, food security and others, and
- 6) Distributes relief foods and materials for the affected households in line with the policies of DPPO.

#### **4.2.3 Kebele Development Committee**

This structure will play fundamental role in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of food security projects. Therefore, the establishment of this structure should be given priority in food security interventions. The Kebele Development Committee (KDC) will be composed of Kebele administrator, development agent, local school director (where available), health agent, religious leader, women's representatives, farmer/non-farmers representatives and youth representative (see the structure, Annex 7). KDC will be accountable to the Kebele administration council and will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- i. Identifies, prioritizes, and participates in planning of food security projects in the Kebele,
- ii. Mobilizes human resources and local materials for the execution of the projects,
- iii. Identifies the affected households and targets (selects) project beneficiaries.
- iv. Submits timely financial and physical reports to the woreda,
- v. Participates in the monitoring and evaluation of food security projects, and
- vi. Follows-up and manages the projects for their sustainability.

### **4.3 FUNCTIONING MECHANISMS**

The functional mechanism of the coordination office proposed is the following:

#### **4.3.1 Resource Mobilization and Deployment Mechanisms**

Resources for the food security projects can be mobilized from regional and federal governments, multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental organizations and private investors.

##### **4.3.1.1 Regional Government Budget**

The regional government will allocate the budget for FSDPCO in the following areas:

- Annual recurrent and capital budget as per the strategic action plans,
- Food security program budget which will be implemented by relevant bureaus

##### **4.3.1.2 Federal Government Budget**

Regional governments receive federal budget support for food security and infrastructure development. Food security priority woredas receive funds in the form of:

- Block grant that may be extended in the form of grant or credit to implement projects and activities to increase the assets and incomes of the beneficiaries,
- Capacity building by the federal government based on specific projects,
- Investment in information, communication, education, etc. Such funds contribute indirectly to food security project implementation by easing access to woredas, information flows and building human resources for the region for effective planning and implementation.
- Pilot project implementation funds can also be solicited

To obtain such funds the Food Security Coordination department will focus on the following:

- 1) The strong coordination to design the projects with full participation of collaborating partners,
- 2) Staffing and equipping the planning, monitoring and evaluation services
- 3) Intensive lobbying and advocacy to create understanding among policy makers at different levels.

#### **4.3.1.3 Donation from Multilateral, Bilateral and Non-governmental organizations**

To obtain funding from these organizations, the FSDPCO will focus on the following:

- a. Soliciting fund through submission of projects, lobby and advocacy
- b. Organizing donor conference
- c. Capitalizing the support of an alliance group for lobby and advocacy,
- d. Increasing efficiency of NGOs project appraisal and approval mechanism for implementation. It will be particularly important to create conducive policy and working environment for NGOs implementing development programs in the region.

#### **4.3.1.4 Private Investors**

Even though investors have business objectives, they contribute access to food by creating employment opportunities for the households. Therefore, FSDPCO will facilitate and coordinate the following activities to enhance investment in the region:

- ii. Preparation of investment profile,
- iii. Effective licensing of investment,
- iv. Organizing exhibitions/workshops on investment potential of the region.

#### **4.3.2 Coordination Strategies**

Coordination of projects will take place at local (Kebele), Woreda and regional levels. The Kebele Development Committee, with full participation of community, analyzes the situation, identifies potentials and gaps and suggests solution and submits the project proposal to the woreda Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Desk (FSDPCD).

The woreda FSDPCD appraises the project and submits to woreda steering committee. The woreda steering committee will scrutinize the proposals and approves the feasible ones.

The proposals approved by the woreda steering committee will be submitted to the Regional Food Security and Disaster Prevention Coordination Office. Upon approving the proposals the office will release the funds. These procedures ensure accountability for the implementation of the program and activities.

FSDPCO in collaboration with sector bureaus will also review the projects submitted by NGOS for implementation.



### **4.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation is a basic management tool. Thus, a food security program implementation has to be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring, helps identify problems timely and take corrective measures to ensure smooth performance of the project. The underlying aim of evaluation is to establish the extent to which the program has succeeded or failed.

This strategy proposes the need for setting up an effective monitoring and evaluation system for the success of the envisaged food security interventions in the region. The following will be considered:

- A monitoring and evaluation unit with adequate and qualified staff and logistics will be in place in the proposed food security organizational structure
- A monitoring and evaluation framework/system will be established for the intended program at all levels (community, woreda and region), which will be used to assess the progress and impact of the program interventions. Monitoring and evaluation tools and methods will be participatory whereby the community and the Kebele Development Committee play a leading role.
- Standard formats for follow-up and monitoring will be prepared. The format helps to record the quantities of activities accomplished and resources consumed at Kebele and woreda levels. The activity accomplishments will be matched with what have been planned. Moreover, the appropriateness of fund utilization and the extent of use will be monitored regularly.
- A regular reporting of activities accomplished and fund utilization will be made through reporting formats. The basic unit of reporting will normally start from Kebeles where actual implementation of projects will take place. It will then be compiled at woreda level and forwarded to the proposed regional food security office and other concerned bodies. Added to this, planned and unplanned field visits will be arranged to observe program and activities implementation and resources auditing. This is important to follow-up the achievements and to obtain first hand information on the reality at the grassroot to supplement regular reports .

#### **4.3.4 Capacity Building**

For better attainment of the proposed food security programs and sustainability, it is necessary to build the capacity of both the offices and other relevant stakeholders at all levels in the region. The following will be taken in to consideration:

- Training will be provided to build the technical capacity of appropriate personnel in planning, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Community members will participate in all stages of project implementation starting from problem identification and prioritization to monitoring and evaluation. This will play a vital role in raising their capacity and creating a sense of ownership. Moreover, capacity building trainings will be organized for them on relevant areas in relation to food security.
- Incapacitating the appropriate regional and woreda offices by providing training, information, material and technical supports will be essential.
- Technical assistance from donors can be requested until food security office's capacity is built and functions effectively. The technical support may strengthen the planning and programming unit of the food security office to take on its duties and responsibilities and help in further capacity building needed.

#### **4.3.5 Networking**

Establishing good relationships with all stakeholders lays ground for common understanding and joint effort in undertaking development. Networking of partners and stakeholders creates opportunity for experience sharing within and outside of the region. Networking also helps to avoid duplication of activities already done or being done by others in the region. The proposed food security office will establish good relationship with regions implementing food security projects. It is of paramount importance to gain experiences in project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in these regions.

Networking with NGOs and multilateral and bilateral organizations who are sponsoring or implementing food security projects would be important. Moreover, close association with federal organizations such as the Ministry of Federal Affairs and the federal food security authorities will be important to solicit funds and increased support for capacity building.

In order to enhance communication between stakeholders and development partners, creating wide and local area networks is important. Networking with investors and chambers of commerce may create the opportunity for increasing funding in the region, having income generation opportunities.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF THE STRATEGY**

Food security as mentioned before is multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary in nature. With this understanding, the technical team drawn from 10 bureaus of the region has been involved in the design of the strategy with technical assistance from Oxfam Canada and WIBD consult.

The strategic issues were identified based on the findings of the assessments conducted at target woredas, the strategic direction of the region and the country. Due emphasis is given for the issues identified and prioritized by the community.

However, the technical team believes that the finalization of this document requires thorough discussions among stakeholders to ratify the proposed components of the strategy and interventions.

Therefore, the team proposes the following actions for practical implementation of the strategy:

- A workshop to discuss and approve the strategy by the participation of woreda, region, federal, donor, and NGO representatives.
- Formal approval and endorsement of the strategy by the region,
- Approval of the proposed institutional arrangement and organizational structure by the region complementing the comments of the stakeholders
- Design of detailed food security program for target woredas,
- Consultation on the program by stakeholders and approval
- Strengthening the regional alliance group for advocacy and networking,
- Donor conference to mobilize funds and resources for the program
- Strengthen the regional and woreda steering committees and Kebele Development Committees through appropriate technical and policy support.

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