IARAN 2016 Annual Progress Review

Development and Delivery

In 2016 the Inter-Agency Regional Analysts Network (IARAN) covered four regions and the majority of Action Against Hunger’s country programming. In addition, staff in Madrid, London and Washington, D.C. were recruited to support the regional posts and complement the IARAN’s production of regional and country focused products with global reports.

Throughout the year, the IARAN has made progress against the objectives that had previously been set in 2015.

There has been significant progress in the adaptation of tools and approaches to be exploited by IARAN and used in the humanitarian sector. The Strategic Foresight Toolkit was finalized in 2016 and a Strategic Planning Toolkit has been developed and tested. In addition, a significant quantitative project in 2016 delivered a consistent 10 year time series of 122 variables on humanitarian vulnerability for 172 countries. The delivery of this data set together with the hiring of a data

1 2016 Goals for IARAN: 1) Adapting strategic foresight methodologies and tools to the humanitarian sector, 2) Finalizing the IARAN deployment phase by introducing a quantitative component, 3) Increasingly integrate the IARAN into each ACFIN structure to better serve needs across the network, 4) Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation strategy that measures IARAN progress against its objectives and gathers more qualitative data on the use of IARAN products, 5) Continuing to build up relationships with academic and think thank partners and Strengthening the IARAN in continuing to develop the concept of an inter-agency network please see Regional Analysts Network (2016) 2015 Annual Review: Complement and Empower

2 Cordus, Marcella and Ragozini, Giancarlo (November 2026) IARAN Country Database, Universita’ di Napoli Frederico II, Department of Political Science
A year in review

In this year's Annual Report, we have continued to examine request data for IARAN products, compiled from all analysts, to examine the geographic focus, their provenance, and other metrics to see where the IARAN can best be of use to Action Against Hunger, and how our own work can be improved through the feedback given by those working within the network, gathered through a range of surveys.

This past year has been busy and productive for the IARAN, which has delivered 50 outputs and 39 instances of support to inform and be used by those within the Action Against Hunger network. Continuing the trend from 2015, where the Regional Analysts worked to implement the IARAN within their respective region’s country offices, the geographic scope remained highly focalized on country specific

---

dynamics, of which 33% of the projects were requested by Country Directors. From the Country Directors that responded to the feedback survey, 100% of respondents had read or shared IARAN products, and all were satisfied with the quality of the reports. 75% of Country Directors have used the reports to further their own knowledge or to increase the visibility of Action Against Hunger with donors and partners. Global projects accounted for 21% of total projects of which 37% were requested by the International Executive Committee. The year has seen an upward trend in the number of regional projects undertaken with an increase of 9%. This reflects a greater number of collective requests and the IARAN’s focus on supporting strategic issues for multiple HQs in a given region.

With the integration of the analysts at regional level supporting countries within their spheres of influence, it is understandable that the majority of requests of IARAN products comes from Country Directors (33%), for which 52% of the products they request are scenario analyses looking at topics such as a two year outlook and scenario analysis of South Sudan, the possible evolutions of the situation in Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar, an analysis of the political uprising and political stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and foresight work on the effects of the war against the Islamic State and Kurdish policies on Action Against Hunger programming. New this year were requests made by Advocacy, Donor Relations Unit, and Technical Staff (18%). Support products developed for or in collaboration with these teams include briefings on topics or situations such as the growing contributions from South Korea to the aid sector, to reports on the ever-changing situations in Syria and Yemen. The IARAN’s ability to serve such a wide variety of staff within the network on a range of topics has become a strong attribute for Action Against Hunger and was a key objective for the IARAN in 2016.

Key to the success of the IARAN in Action Against Hunger is ensuring that it reaches and supports different departments within the organization. While the bulk of the requests have stemmed from Operations at field or regional level there is greater diversity in the requesters than in 2015 including from Advocacy, the Donor Relations Unit and Security staff.

Communication Products to Enhance Visibility
To further enhance the impact of reports written by the regional analysts, public reports have been accompanied by communications products such as infographics, one pagers, videos, presentations and podcasts. In 2016, 13 infographics, 1 video, 1 podcast, 5 presentations, and 2 blogs have been created to increase the visibility of the IARAN and Action Against Hunger.

These communication products in support of the main reports, have been used to inform and influence stakeholders at all levels regarding pertinent topics such as the European Migrant Crisis, the situations in South Sudan, Syria, and many more, while also aiding internally during strategic planning trainings, and regional presentations. The response in the network has been positive towards these new additions, a majority of respondents in our Annual Survey 2016 have found the communication products that follow the reports to make the latter more accessible, particularly infographics and 1 pagers. 2017 is set for an influx of communication products as more reports will become public, ultimately increasing visibility.
There were 16 requests for support from the Advocacy, Technical and the Donor Relations Unit; this is a significant increase from the previous year where no requests had been made from teams outside operations. While overall level of requests are still low for these units, 70% have said they had read or used IARAN reports in their work, with 30% saying they had shared the products with a variety of stakeholders to increase the visibility of Action Against Hunger. While surveying staff from the Advocacy, Donor Relations, and Technical Units, it is apparent from the results that more work is needed to better integrate the IARAN within these parts of the organization. What is important for future interaction between the IARAN and these three teams is to ensure that they are aware of the projects the IARAN is undertaking and how the work can bring benefits to the work they do.

The type of work undertaken by the IARAN continues to evolve and diversify, not only based on the regions and countries that are requesting outputs or support, but also based on the events occurring at that time around the world. In 2016, 22% of the work undertaken by the IARAN revolved around the support of workshops and meetings, and 21% around content support.

Contributing to the work load of the IARAN in 2016 were also large amounts of scenario analysis (16 outputs) and key trends analysis (12 outputs).
New to the work the IARAN has done previously have been the quantitative analysis. Including a quantitative report on the links between chronic malnutrition and natural disasters, as well as a document regarding guidelines for standardization in data collection and storage. The position transforms data into information, and information into insight. The role involves gathering, cleaning, transforming and modelling data with the purpose of drawing conclusions, and at time constitute a whole report and at other times complements qualitative studies. The addition of a quantitative component to the IARAN is key; it expands the variety of input data that can be used, and helps find the links between certain phenomena through data modeling.

For example, in 2016 the data scientist worked on a report on the ‘Relation between Natural Disasters and Malnutrition Rates in Guatemala’. The objective of the report was to undertake a statistical analysis in conjunction with data visualization to assess the existence of possible links between the occurrence of natural disasters and malnutrition rates prevalence. The quantitative component for this report allows the IARAN to work with objective recorded data on many different variables at the same time, avoiding subjective biases on the perception of these phenomena and allowing quantifying their impacts and relationships between them.

The cost to Action Against Hunger per IARAN analytical output is estimated at €16,500 per deliverable\(^4\). This figure is substantially below the market value of analysis work (€18,000–€32,000)\(^5\). For strategic planning support, the cost to Action against hunger is €33,000 which includes the production of a piece of foresight analysis tailored to the Country Office as well as a participative strategy workshop. Again, this figure represents a substantial saving for the organization given the bench mark of seeking such support externally (€38,000 – €52,000). These figures are a crude metric of final outputs and does not include any of the additional support services (briefings, workshops, external representation) that IARAN analysts provide or the methodological research being led by the team.

**Using analysis**

---

\(^4\) This figure is based on the production of 50 outputs per year. While the type of project the IARAN works on varies, the market comparison is based on an average number of days IARAN reports take to produce (30-40 days).

\(^5\) Market bench marking for analysis work and strategic planning are adapted from the costs charged by our partners undertaking comparable projects for the public and private sector – University of Denver, University of Naples Frederico II, IRIS and Futuribles.
For the IARAN, it is not only important to have those in the Action Against Hunger and in partner organizations reading and sharing the reports, but it is also important for them to have a value-add. When those who have read these reports are able to use them in their work or to underpin other projects, this objective will have been achieved. In the Annual Survey, 80% of those who have read or shared a IARAN report agreed that the analysis produced was useful for their work.

The most frequently cited uses of IARAN analysis or support was to integrate futures focused analysis into their work, increasing Action Against Hunger’s visibility, informing their decision making and in positioning Action Against Hunger on key issues. While the percentage of satisfaction with utility is high, there were still comments by some on having difficulty understanding the how to use products in their own work or position within the organization, besides enhancing their own knowledge of certain issues, indicating that there is still more work to be done.

Stakeholder mapping for Lebanon was conducted as one of the first steps to accompany the deployment of the Advocacy Department in the mission. The work of the IARAN analyst facilitated very much the first stages of the advocacy strategy, especially to start identifying and mobilizing the internal sources and flows of information in the mission with dedicated time. The high political volatility of the Lebanese context made it difficult for this report to set predicted scenarios, so instead of focusing on this task, the final product offered a decipherable analysis of the constant socio-political structure and the correlation between each of the governmental strata plus an oversight of the regional dynamics affecting the internal politics.

Diana Jimenez Suela, Lebanon Advocacy Officer

The protracted crisis taking place in the transboundary region between Myanmar and Bangladesh (Rakhine/Chittagong) drives important migration outflows. A diverse, mixed population has long been leaving for various reasons (poverty, insecurity, and human rights violations against some communities notably), while trying to reach neighboring countries, particularly Malaysia. We requested a foresight study on the evolution of the pull factors for these migrations, to better understand the phenomenon and its impact on the source region, where two Action Against Hunger country offices are actively engaged. Built upon extensive participation from Action Against Hunger teams in the field and capital, as well as numerous meetings with external stakeholders, the analysis was delivered at a very timely moment, when the recent escalation in violence across Northern Rakhine state since October 2016 pushed tens of thousands of more people into Bangladesh and beyond. The report circulated widely among key humanitarian agencies, and the findings will be presented and discussed during an important meeting in Sittwe, where the humanitarian community is to redefine its strategic response plan to the crisis.

Juan Gabriel Wells, Myanmar Country Director
How have you used IARAN analysis/support? 

With all the activities that the IARAN undertakes, it is important that those who get their projects prioritized feel that they are getting the support necessary. 66% of respondents to the Annual Surveys felt that they received sufficient support from the IARAN in using the analysis that was produced. The collaborative process underpinning all projects ensures that requesting teams feel empowered. The success of this approach is reflected in the results of the annual survey-- 58% of respondents felt they could approach the IARAN for support. A collaborative approach and easy access to IARAN reports is equally important in small-scale projects as it is in the case of larger-scale country strategic planning processes.

Spotlight on Strategic Planning

The primary objective of the IARAN is to support teams to enhance strategic programming within the Action Against Hunger network. This entails offering support to countries through the production of foresight analysis, but also through workshops with country teams to transform this analysis into strategy. In 2016, the IARAN held workshops in Cote d’Ivoire, Cameroon, South Sudan and Tanzania to test out the IARAN strategic toolkit.

In 2015, the IARAN developed a Strategic Foresight Toolkit and methodologies that analysts use to create the analytical products. In 2016, IARAN created and tested a toolkit used to transform that foresight into strategy. This uses different strategy planning tools from the private and humanitarian sectors, as well as different project management approaches to facilitate workshops with staff and partners to produce several strategic options for deliberation to the team, based on the foresight analysis first produced by the analysts. It involves five key aspects: mapping vulnerabilities, the actor matrix, a problem analysis, an objectives analysis, and an actor-objective matrix. Through these steps, the IARAN and country teams can produce a multitude of strategies corresponding to the realm of possible futures with a series of objectives for each. The creation of this toolkit was done with the help of IARAN partners such as Futuribles.

6 Of the 50 respondents to the Annual Survey, 42 people answered this question
The diversity of the contexts which were selected for tests of the Strategic Toolkit enabled IARAN to learn how it functions in different environments. Each test brought something different: in Cote d'Ivoire the office is in a post-emergency phase moving to focus more on longer-term objectives, in Cameroon the toolkit explored how to create a strategy for a country with two distinct regions of complexity – one driven by the impact of the Boko Haram crises the other with the displacement resulting from the Central African Republic, in South Sudan was a test for the approach in an unstable and emergency context, finally the test in Tanzania allowed the team to apply the toolkit to a country with limited existing Action Against Hunger programing. Through all four tests, the toolkit held up to expectations and was strengthened by the lessons learned. It has now been finalized and can be rolled out to other country offices, regions and for global teams.

Together, the Regional Director and I requested IARAN support for the strategy development process in Cote d'Ivoire. As a relatively small office we were eager to use the opportunity to reflect on how we could orient our programing and allocate our resources most effectively. The strategic options that were produced through the IARAN method yielded an output that was better grounded in the realities of the country and more reflective of our stake in it than our previous strategy. This resulted in a real shift in mind-set for all our staff; putting our work in perspective of the needs and challenges in Cote d'Ivoire gave everyone a better understanding of the bigger picture in which we were working. It became clear how we could use the programs we were already running to leverage lasting change in country and contribute to the objectives that we had set ourselves. This long-term perspective, underpinned by analysis, gives us the robust strategy to improve our credibility with donors and other partners. We are confident that this will help us to secure funds to implement our strategy, moving beyond responding to donor calls and priorities to driving the agenda of development in Cote d'Ivoire.

**Andrea Dominici, Country Director in Cote d'Ivoire**

A survey of the country offices for which the IARAN helped develop strategies in 2016 using the toolkit, showed all respondents agreeing that the IARAN delivered a strategy underpinned by a futures focused approach. 100% of respondents felt the strategies developed are better adapted to the context and better enabled them leverage the programs and investments of the office towards longer-term objectives. In addition, the collaborative approach that allows for inputs from all levels of management was seen as a definitive benefit to the process. The main challenges with the approach were putting together the panel for the workshop and the time commitment that was required from staff (3 days).

There will be a strategic planning training in February 2017 to give Operations staff within the Action Against Hunger a new approach to designing a context-adapted and robust country strategy. This training has three objectives: to reflect on the use of strategy in the humanitarian sector; to teach the participants how to use the tools designed to develop a futures focused, context-sensitive strategy; and finally, to train the operations staff so that they can use the strategic toolkit or train others on it with limited IARAN support.
Partnership approach

The IARAN produces and delivers their products to a range of stakeholders within Action Against Hunger, but can only produce such high-quality analysis because of the various partnerships they are a part of, whether with educational institutions like the University of Naples or through partnering with international think tanks like Futuribles and IRIS (The French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs). These partnerships provide significant benefits to the analysis produced by the IARAN through support in database management to subject matter expertise on certain topics and countries. Though the IARAN benefits from these partnerships, 86% of respondents of a stakeholder survey said that they too saw benefits to their own organizations through working in collaboration with the IARAN. These benefits come from the strengths of the IARAN which, in their view, are the link to an operational NGO (86%), the quality of the deliverables (71%), and the toolkit and methods employed (71%), all leading to a high-end product for all.

A Junior Analysts Program has been created in IRIS which pairs graduate students hired as part-time researchers with a Regional or Global Analyst in IARAN. Junior Analysts, based at IRIS in Paris, work to produce driver files and research notes in support of IARAN analysis reports which substantially contribute to the building of the IARAN library. Junior Analysts receive continual training on analysis tools and mentoring throughout the year. This has been a very successful venture that will be taken forward in 2017.

In 2016 the IARAN began work on a global project looking at an outlook for the Humanitarian Sector in 2030. This is a substantial piece of work which the IARAN has undertaken in partnership with Futuribles drawing on experts from Harvard, Georgetown University, IRIS, Science Po and the Overseas Development Institute. Without the partnerships and network that the IARAN has established leveraging the expertise of these institutions would not be possible.

In 2017, the IARAN will look to grow the breadth of its partnerships looking for opportunities to work with other operational agencies and research initiatives.

IARAN 2017

In response to feedback that Action Against Hunger would like the IARAN to work on issues that are strategic for the whole organization, the IARAN will reorient its focus to the global projects portfolio. This will mean a restructure of resources to provide the International Executive Committee and the International Management Groups with more opportunity to request support. While this will somewhat reduce the support at country and regional level, with the addition of the Strategic Toolkit we hope that this reduction will be offset by an increase in the use of the analysis that is produced through its articulation with strategy.

2017 is the final year of the IARAN pilot in Action Against Hunger, building from the test phase in Save the Children and as a result a portion of staff time will also be dedicated to projects and initiatives that will round out the IARAN library and respond to critical research questions for the project.
In 2016, the total budget for the IARAN was £819,600 (USD $1,021,000 at current ER). The actual spent reported from IARAN in 2016 at the close of the year was £714,400 (USD $890,000 at current ER). This total figure is incomplete as it does not include all the actual spend in the various regions and HQs where IARAN staff are hosted due to a delay in the costs being recharged to the budget held in London.

From that budget, £167,700 (USD $209,000 at current ER) was transferred to the Institute of International Relations and Strategy (IRIS) in Paris. 63% of this sum went to developing, designing, testing, and piloting the Foresight Toolkit in addition to the IARAN Strategic Toolkit, which were adapted for the humanitarian sector; in addition to supporting the costs involved with the researchers, IRIS provides to verify and test the hypotheses put in place by the analysts in the foresight reports. 13% of the IRIS budget in 2016 went towards software and subscriptions to maintain the databases used by the analysts. Finally, 24% of the budget was spent on analysts' training, coaching and mentoring, which was undertaken through partner organizations such as Futuribles.

The Action Against Hunger UK office managed the remaining budget, of this the largest expenditures were on the team's human resources £436,100 (USD $543,000 USD at current ER). This includes the costs involved for the 5 Analysts, the Data Scientist, the IARAN Communications and Administration Officer, the Chief Analyst, and the Director of Analysis and Strategy. Additionally, included under the human resources category, is the money spent on travel expenses, including flights, accommodation and meals. The other significant area of spend was on research projects undertaken in partnership and consultancies – in 2016 this spend totaled £110,600 (USD $138,000 USD at current ER).