

## What Phase 3 actually asserts

A Phase 3 classification says at least one household in five in an area is in Phase 3 or worse. It does not say the area is in crisis, that four fifths are fine, or that anything about any particular household is known.

---

Pierre Robentz Cassion

Lesson 8 of 8

Food Security Analysis and IPC — What a phase classification asserts

## What this lesson covers

- The sentence, in full
- It is a threshold, not an average
- It says nothing about any household
- The 4 in Phase 4 is not four times the 1
- A classification is a group's judgement, not a computation
- What this analysis could and could not support
- The habit these three courses were for
- What comes next

## The sentence, in full

At least 20% of households in the area are in Phase 3 or worse, having food consumption gaps with high or above-usual acute malnutrition, **or** are marginally able to meet minimum food needs only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis coping strategies.

## It is a threshold, not an average

- The 20% rule is the whole mechanism — An area is classified in the highest phase for which at least a fifth of the...

# It is a threshold, not an average — In Python

```
import pandas as pd

# Illustrative distribution across an area
distribution = pd.Series({
    "Phase 1 -- None/Minimal": 0.34,
    "Phase 2 -- Stressed": 0.44,
    "Phase 3 -- Crisis": 0.18,
    "Phase 4 -- Emergency": 0.04,
})
cumulative = distribution[::-1].cumsum()[::-1]
print((cumulative * 100).round(1))
print("Highest phase reaching 20%:",
      cumulative[cumulative >= 0.20].index[-1])
```

## It is a threshold, not an average — In R

```
# Cumulate from the worst phase down; the classification is the last one  
# that still reaches 20%.
```

## It is a threshold, not an average

- So "the area is in Phase 3" and "the average household is in Phase 3" are different claims, and only the first is made. . .

## It says nothing about any household

- This is the most consequential misuse — A Phase 3 area is not a targeting list; the households inside it range from. . .

## It says nothing about any household — In Python

```
print("Area classification → geographic prioritisation")  
print("Household indicators → who inside it is eligible")  
print("These are different analyses on different units.")
```

# It says nothing about any household — In R

*# Two questions, two units of analysis, two datasets.*

## The 4 in Phase 4 is not four times the 1

- So phases cannot be averaged, subtracted or trended arithmetically — A national figure of "mean phase 2.6" is...

## The 4 in Phase 4 is not four times the 1 — In Python

```
population = pd.Series({"Phase 1": 340_000, "Phase 2": 440_000,  
                        "Phase 3": 180_000, "Phase 4": 40_000})  
print(f"Phase 3 or above: {population[['Phase 3', 'Phase 4']].sum():,} people")  
print(f"share: {population[['Phase 3', 'Phase 4']].sum() / population.sum():.1%}")
```

# The 4 in Phase 4 is not four times the 1 — In R

*# People per phase. Never a mean phase.*

## A classification is a group's judgement, not a computation

- Nothing in this course produces a phase, and that is not a gap in the course.

# What this analysis could and could not support — Example (cont.)

Lean season 2024, four districts

What the evidence supports

A deterioration is underway: six of six indicators point the same way, and the year-on-year maize comparison at the same point in the season is +22% with wage terms of trade down 49%.

Coping and asset depletion are widespread: 48.5% of households used a crisis or emergency livelihood strategy.

What it does not support

An area phase classification. Nutritional status and mortality are the outcome indicators the IPC weights most heavily and neither was collected. This is consumption and coping evidence only.

A household targeting list. The survey identifies indicators, not eligibility, and four indicators disagree about which households are affected by a factor of seven.

## What this analysis could and could not support — Example (cont.)

What would settle it

A SMART nutrition survey in the same districts, and a second market round in October to establish whether the peak has passed.

## What this analysis could and could not support

- "What it does not support" is the section that gets an analysis taken seriously — and it is the section most likely to...

## The habit these three courses were for

- **What did I count, over what?** Six denominators in this course alone, and no two of the four household indicators. . .
- **What else could explain it?** Seasonality, which moves maize 74% within a year and would have been read as a . . .
- **What should someone do differently because of this?** The evidence supports prioritising the districts and acting. . .
- The vocabulary changes by sector and the questions do not — MUAC and weight-for-height in nutrition, three. . .

## What comes next

- Module 4 continues with protection case management and education attendance.

Read the full lesson, with runnable code

```
https://data-analysis.cassion.dev/courses/food-security-ipc/  
fs-08-what-phase-3-claims
```