



Research report for GA1

Establishing protocols for food security in conflict zones

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Introduction

According to the International Humanitarian Law, it is not allowed to attack, destroy or to nullify objects indispensable to the survival of the population of a nation. Some items considered to be indispensable include food, agricultural areas, crops, and livestock, as well as drinking water installations and supplies. Furthermore, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is illegal and considered a war crime. With almost 60 percent of the world's 811 million hungry people living in areas affected by armed violence, conflict zones are the greatest opposition in achieving food security for all civilians of the world. Historically, food insecurity has fallen by a large percentage globally. In 1991–92, 1.2 billion people were undernourished globally, with that number declining to 991 million in the 2000s and currently 811 million. However, the number of undernourished people has increased over the last three years. In early 2017, a famine was declared in South Sudan, alerts went out to signal high risk of famine-like conditions in north-east Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. Similarly, the frequency of conflicts had decreased in recent decades, but increased recently. There is a high correlation between food insecurity and conflict. Whenever there is conflict in an area the percentage of people in that area that suffer from famine or food insecurity increases. Additionally, all countries currently at high risk of famine also experience significant violent conflict. These add up to over 9000 conflict deaths during 2017 in South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. Some conflict affected countries also suffer from natural disasters such as droughts or floods that are affecting or damaging food production, trade and markets and food consumption.

Key terms

- Establishing protocols: A firm permanent basis of official procedures
- Food security: Having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable; nutritious food
- Conflict zones: Land where military forces battle against each other.
- Distributions: The act of sharing something out with a number of people.
- Purchasing power: Income available to spend.
- Kitchen program: An establishment providing individuals with ingredients so that they can cook for themselves.
- Hunger: A feeling of discomfort caused by lack of food coupled with the desire to eat.
- Relief: Financial or practical assistance given to those in special need or difficulty.


Major Countries and Organisations involved

International Committee of the Red Cross - The ICRC is the largest humanitarian network in the world. According to its website, “its mission is to alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, and uphold human dignity, especially during armed conflicts and other emergencies.” The ICRC has a high prestige and since its founding in 1863 they have always attempted to improve the situation of innocent civilians in difficult situations. ICRC veterinarians help boost the food security of people affected by conflict through animal-health and production interventions. They implement livestock programmes to support the recovery process of people whose economies are largely based on livestock. Throughout 2012, the ICRC has distributed large quantities of food, seed and medical care to around 160,000 civilians in Northern Mali. The ICRC has over 14 million volunteers working all across the globe helping those deprived of basic human rights.

World Food Programme - The WFP is a branch of the United Nations focused on food and for the world. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation focused on hunger and food security and it helps over 80 million people in 80 countries each year. The WFP was founded in 1961 and consists of 36 member states. The WFP aims to save lives by distributing food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience to their situations. The WFP also aims to sustainably help communities in being able to grow their food production. THE WFP's engagement of communities to help rebuild irrigation canals in disputed territories along Kyrgyzstan's border with Tajikistan led to an increase in water supplies and agricultural productivity. This caused a decrease in inter-community conflict over water.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation- The FAO is another branch of the United Nations which is a specialised agency that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security. Founded shortly after the Second World War in 1945, the FAO currently has 197 member states. The FAO's goal is to achieve food security for the global population and make sure that individuals have access to nutritious food which allows them to live a healthy and active lifestyle. The FAO has been active in the ongoing Syrian conflict by being on the ground in Syria and providing farmers with seeds and other supplies as well as by vaccinating their livestock so that livestock do not die and therefore resulting in a decrease in food supply for the Syrian population.

Afghanistan - Afghanistan is one of the worst affected nations in the world from having a lack of food security. Around 7.6 million people in Afghanistan suffer from food insecurity due to the ongoing conflict going on. This is an increase from the previous estimates of July 2016 which were 4.3 million people. Currently 26% of the Afghan population suffer from food insecurity. Due to the conflict insufficient local production of wheat and cereals has fallen. Additionally declining livestock production, insufficient water resources for



agriculture, poor quality of drinking water has caused many of the Afghan population to suffer from hunger.

Democratic Republic of Congo - The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the nations with the highest population suffering from food security. Currently there are 7.7 million Congolese suffering from food insecurity which accounts for 11% of Congo's population. There is ongoing violence across the country, particularly in the Ituri, Kasai, and Kivu regions. More than one hundred armed groups, such as the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces. Despite the presence of more than sixteen thousand UN peacekeepers, these groups continue to terrorize communities and control weakly governed areas. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee the fighting: the United Nations predicts there are currently 4.5 million internally displaced people in the DRC, and more than 800,000 DRC refugees in other nations. The conflict has caused poor harvest, disease and collapsing infrastructure and therefore it is hard for there to be consistent food security in the nation.


South Sudan - 75% of the population of South Sudan suffers from food insecurity. This accounts to 8.3 million people in South Sudan. According to many news reports the food crisis in South Sudan is the worst ever. The Sudanese civil war only ended over two years ago in February 2020 and the Sudanese population is still suffering to this day of the food crisis. Due to the war there has been disrupted trade with the nation and has not allowed them to produce as much food as possible.

General overview

Food security in conflict zones is one of the main causes of famine globally. The number of hungry people on the planet rose to 815 million people in 2016, up from 777 million the year before. The majority of the hungry live in countries wracked by conflict, 489 million people.

Hunger is high and persistent in countries in extended conflicts. These countries are set apart by recurrent natural disasters or conflict; these countries do not take strong enough measures or actions to combat these crises. Countries in protracted crises usually have recurring problems. Protracted crises call for specifically designed and targeted assistance that addresses the immediate need to save lives and also tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity as well as disaster risk reduction plans. The particular impact on women and children, and the importance of gender perspective in crisis responses, should also be given greater attention.

In accordance with their instructions, regional bodies can have an important role to play in developing regional policies to address food security and nutrition and build strong



regional markets. Regional platforms are also able to provide dialogue among governments, donors and UN agencies. These regional platforms ease common agreement on shared principles and proposed actions and pave the way for improved alignment of policies.


Overcoming the suffering caused by hunger will require efforts of the whole world. The international community has two key roles to play in this regard: first of all to improve its support to regional and national efforts; the second is to coordinate united responses to global challenges related to food insecurity and malnutrition.

The international community has consistently shown its full support and commitment to support national governments in their efforts to fight hunger. The declaration of the First Rome Principle for Sustainable Global Food Security includes a commitment to “intensify international support to advance effective country-led and regional strategies, to develop country-led investment plans, and to promote mutual responsibility, transparency and accountability”. There are many international providers of aid for conflict-stricken nations. They range from individual donor countries, international and regional financing institutions, international NGOs and private sector foundations.

Conflict struck countries which are heavily dependent on the import of primary commodities, such as fuel or food, are extremely vulnerable to disruptions in international trade caused by conflicts. This will drastically decrease the quantity of food the nation is able to produce and therefore lead to an increase in the population which suffers from famine. “According to Collier (2000) the countries which have a substantial share of their GDP coming from the export of unprocessed commodities face a much higher likelihood of civil war than countries with more diversified economies. A country with a level of primary commodity dependence of 26% of GDP has a risk of conflict of 23%. The same country, but without primary commodity exports, would have a risk of conflict of 0.5%.”

In 1982, the Ethiopian government formalised national military service for the entire working people. By 1984 almost 10 percent of the 5.8 million strong population aged between 18 and 40 were serving in the army. During the years 1975 and 1990, the number of conscripted soldiers dead was estimated to be about 650,000 people, of which 500,000 were civilians. 100,000 of the 300,000 demobilised soldiers returning home at the end of the conflict in 1991 were recorded to be wounded or disabled. Between 1986 and 1989, 23,000 hectares of land were rendered unfit for cultivation, while 44,000 animals died. This heavily affected food production for Ethiopia, it was estimated that the cost of the Ethiopian conflict amounted to between 65,000 and 95,000 tonnes of lost annual production. This is one of the most disastrous famines ever encountered by an African country during the past century.

In today’s world, food aid has become the most common intervention to alleviate conflict related hunger. Food relief has been criticised for failing to reach those in need. It is predicted that the percentage of food aid that effectively reaches the targeted groups adds up to between 10 percent to 12 percent. This failure is largely due to the strategies




of aggressors who consider hunger as a weapon to weaken each other and therefore target food aid to attack food security. Women, children and the elderly are typically the most frequent victims of hunger in wars. In war, children usually are the dramatic victims of hunger and war and they often die in great numbers from malnutrition related illnesses. It is estimated that in Somalia in 1992, up to 90 percent of children under the age of five died.

In nations where financial rewards are given for food production such as “food for work” operations, the reconstruction of the agricultural sector in the nation sustainably develops and increases production.

Previous attempts to solve this issue

- **1994 - Abkhazia:** A kitchen program running since 1994. In 1996, about 20 such kitchens were supplying meals covering all daily food energy requirements to some 7,000 elderly and other needy individuals selected by the community. Fresh food is supplied to canteens by local producers whose activities are supported by the ICRC.
- **1995** - Food and cash for work programmes created in order to increase people's purchasing power, while rehabilitating vital structures (sanitation facilities, roads, irrigation facilities, etc.) Rwanda (1995): food and cash for work to rehabilitate sanitation systems (about 100 workers per project) — Afghanistan, Mali, Somalia: rehabilitation of irrigation systems, programmes for the manufacturing of farming tools and fishing nets. In Afghanistan, the community had to rehabilitate one third of its irrigation canals using its own labour and cash resources before the ICRC provided support, so as to ensure community participation and commitment.
- **1995** - General food distributions as a back-up until the next harvest: This is done until there is sufficient agricultural return for farmers to keep the seed for the planting season. This is so that locals are able to have access to food even when there are drought seasons and do not have to heavily rely on weather conditions. Rwanda (1995): food aid for some 70,000 resident and returnee families to facilitate the resumption of agricultural production.
- **1996** - The World Food Summit, organised by the FAO and attended by some 150 governments, was held in Rome in November 1996. The ICRC took part in the proceedings as an observer and its Vice-President addressed the conference. The International Committee of the Red Cross hosted the meeting and their focus was on creating a strategy described as a “pyramid” of nutrition and environmental baseline of relief operations. In the meeting they discussed: Distribution of food and non food relief, specifically improving biological utilisation of food in Rwanda in 1995 as there were food packages for 360,000 people per month; public kitchens so that individuals are able to cook for themselves; setting up emergency



water and environmental health facilities to provide an immediate supply of water in order to help safeguard individuals' health as seen in Burundi (1995): mobile treatment units were brought in to provide drinking water for displaced persons in a temporary camp.


- **2020:** Nations around the world such as Germany and France increase their humanitarian budgets to combat global hunger. France increases its food aid program to battle international famine and respect international humanitarian law. The French budget increased its 2019 spending of 40 million euros to 50 million euros in 2020. Germany has increased its international humanitarian budget to \$2.5 billion in 2020. Although nations have increased their international humanitarian aid, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the amount of people without a secure access to food and has created more difficulties for individuals in countries with conflicts in their access to foreign aid for food.
- **2021:** The World Food Programme increases its budget spending in order to tackle world food poverty and plans to reach 138 million individuals suffering from hunger. The World Food Programme aims to specifically aid individuals in conflict zones. An example the World Food Programme gives is the 21.8 million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo which currently are experiencing crisis or worse food insecurity levels - the highest number ever recorded in any single country. The WFP is currently tackling this.

Possible solutions

People argue that well timed interventions targeted to stabilise food security in a conflict zone are able to build flexibility to conflict. Food security helps people and the entirety of the nation to handle and recover from the damage created by conflict. They support economic development in the nation as nations will be able to produce larger quantities of food and will be able to grow independently.

- **Respect access to food as a human right during violent conflict**

One of the human rights is guaranteed access to food for any human. All governments around the world should attempt to take emergency measures to secure food equally for all of its population. If a government cannot prevent or mitigate a food crisis, it should allow and facilitate relief operations as demanded by humanitarian law and should allow for UN intervention. However, governments are often unable or unwilling to respond adequately to food crises. At the same time, international relief operations such as those of the UN face challenges of reaching the people most in need and avoiding exacerbating the conflict.



All parties involved in the conflict need to comply with humanitarian principles to guarantee humanitarian access. Any government or other party involved in prohibiting parts of the population from access to food must be sanctioned accordingly.

- **Attempting to create links between humanitarian action and peace talks**

International relief operations in food crises' main goal is to prevent or lessen human suffering caused by disasters and conflicts. The short term method for food aid during conflicts focuses on increasing consumption of food for communities suffering from the conflict. However, one of the main issues when it comes to providing food security is guaranteed workers' safety and security, gaining data of affected populations or accessing those who are directly in the conflict. Furthermore, food aid can undermine local food production and therefore affect the development of local capacity reducing sustainability.

Short term food aid mainly focuses on reducing human suffering instead of resolving violent conflict. On the other hand, long term humanitarian assistance, as provided particularly in post conflict situations can identify potential conflicts and address them, reducing the risk of conflict intensification. Usually, these interventions have a stronger impact than the immediate supply of food and already include development assistance measures. Long-term food assistance normally plays a crucial role in restoring agricultural production and most importantly consolidating peace. However, it is vital to initiate its provision early enough otherwise long term consequences can be created. Nevertheless, aid agencies must be conscious that the longer food aid is provided, the more it has a direct impact on the local food market and other microeconomics trends.

- **The integration of local capacities**

Conflict-affected populations adopt very different strategies to secure food. Farmers change their strategies and rather than aiming to maximise agricultural profits, farmers may change their crop production to a low risk, low return strategy by switching their production from cash cow crops to less profitable crops as these crops can be easily transferred in case of having to be transferred. However, maintaining these low risk low return strategies after conflicts end affects their recovery as farmers no longer have capital to rebuild their farms.

Pastors, on the other hand, may adapt livestock production to the conflict. For example by selling livestock to have sufficient cash or hide livestock from armed groups. Additionally, research reports have shown that households increase their use of safety nets to reduce uncertainty. Therefore, providing safety for livestock could provide more security for the local community as livestock will be allowed to reproduce and grow safely and more food will be available.

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