



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# PEACE AND FOOD SECURITY

Investing in resilience to sustain  
rural livelihoods amid conflict

# INTRODUCTION

South Sudan has been mired in civil conflict since December 2013. Some 2.8 million people – almost a quarter of the population - are now facing acute food and nutrition insecurity. One of them, Nyalen Kuong, was on an intravenous feeding drip. “I’m not sick, I’m hungry,” she told the camp hospital doctor. Nyalen lost her husband, two sons and all the family’s cattle during an attack on her village. After the attack, she took shelter with her daughters and many other families on islands protected by miles of swamps. She was suffering from diarrhoea caused by acute malnutrition. She ate little food, and her body was no longer able to absorb even the meagre nutrients available. After treatment, Nyalen returned to her daughters and, with the help of equipment distributed by FAO, she is now able to catch fish in order to survive, and has the makings of a new livelihood.

Nyalen’s case is but one example among millions of how conflict causes hunger, destroys individual and household resilience, and undermines rural livelihoods. For many people affected by conflict, agriculture is their only means of survival. Addressing this requires life-saving interventions, but also requires support to livelihoods and resilience, even in abject and insecure conditions.

Most conflicts mainly affect rural areas and their populations. This is particularly true for civil conflicts, which have tripled in recent years, and which today are the most common form of armed conflict, and increasingly prolonged. Such conflicts damage agriculture, disrupt food production and food systems, fuel the plundering of crops and livestock, and cause loss of assets and incomes. As a result, they are major drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition, both acute and chronic.

The proportion of undernourished people is almost three times as high in countries in conflict and protracted crisis than in other developing countries. Approximately 167 million undernourished people live in countries in protracted crisis today – roughly one fifth of all people suffering from hunger. Malnutrition tends to affect children the most and, when it happens at a critical age may cause life-long mental and physical handicaps. Conflict has lasting, multi-generational impacts on human development.

Food insecurity can trigger conflict: the sharp increases in food prices in 2008, accompanied by cuts in food and fuel subsidies reduced real incomes of, mainly urban, populations and triggered

food riots in many countries. Dispossession of assets, such as land or cattle, or other threats to food security, can fuel conflict. Reduced access to food may compound other forms of grievance and discontent, such as poverty, unemployment or marginalisation.

Combining efforts to restore and support resilient livelihoods with peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts is critical for sustainable development and food security and nutrition. Equally, investing in food security may strengthen the efforts to prevent conflict and achieve sustained peace.

For decades, FAO has worked in, and across, both humanitarian

**INVESTING IN RESILIENCE AND FOOD SECURITY HELPS FIGHT HUNGER AND BUILD PEACE**

## SYRIA

A family on the outskirts of Damascus.  
©FAO/Faidutti



and development spheres in order to protect, save and restore livelihoods, reduce food insecurity and malnutrition and improve resilience of livelihoods and agricultural systems. FAO supports investments in capacity at the local, national, regional and global levels to reduce poverty and build sustainable food and agricultural systems.

For example, supporting agriculture based livelihoods, ensuring effective coverage of social protection systems, addressing issues of land tenure and of access to natural resources, and fostering employment opportunities for youth can effectively contribute to peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. They can also help people stay on their land when they feel safe to do so, and create conducive conditions for the return of refugees, migrants and displaced people.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges these challenges, and recognizes peace as a vital threshold condition for development, as well as a development outcome in its own right. The first two sustainable development goals focus on the eradication of poverty and hunger, and achieving food security and making agriculture sustainable. The 2030 Agenda sees achievement of these goals as critical to achieving the further goal of ensuring the establishment of peaceful and inclusive societies.

Recognizing that preventing crises and sustaining peace are shared, Charter-based responsibilities across the entire UN system, the 2030 Agenda opens the way to new and collaborative approaches that integrate humanitarian assistance and conflict-prevention through resilience building efforts.

The UN system must work in an integrated and coherent manner to provide timely humanitarian assistance, build resilience to reduce risk, mitigate and prevent conflict, and sustain peace. FAO and its partners have a key role to play on all of these fronts, with successful experiences to build on. Some examples are presented below, showing how peace dividends can be derived from interventions supporting agriculture and food security.

Reducing armed conflict and extreme poverty - and addressing their consequences - are key to ending hunger. Along with the eradication of hunger, peace is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Food security and agriculture have a meaningful and often unnoticed contribution to make to this global challenge.

# FACTS AND FIGURES

**1** The proportion of undernourished people living in countries in conflict and protracted crisis is **almost three times higher** than that in other developing countries.

**2** Post-conflict countries with high food insecurity are 40% more likely to **relapse into conflict** within a 10-year timespan.

**3** Agriculture accounts for two-thirds of **employment** and one-third of GDP in countries in protracted crises.

**4** Civil strife caused a loss of 438 Kcal in average per capita daily food-energy intake in **Somalia**, about 20% of minimum daily food requirements.

**5** Livelihoods of 80% of the population of South Sudan depend on **livestock**, a sector that has lost \$2 billion in potential GDP during the current conflict.

**6** Since 2000, 48% of civil conflicts have been in Africa where **access to rural land** underpins the livelihoods of many and in 27 out of 30 interstate conflicts in Africa land issues played a significant role.

**7** Rural Mayan women in Guatemala exposed to the country's civil war (1985-1997) received 30% less **schooling** compared to older and younger generations.

**8** Every day in 2014, conflicts and violence forced approximately 42,500 people to flee their homes and seek safety either internally or across borders. Fewer **refugees** (only 1%) have returned, less than at any point over the past 30 years.

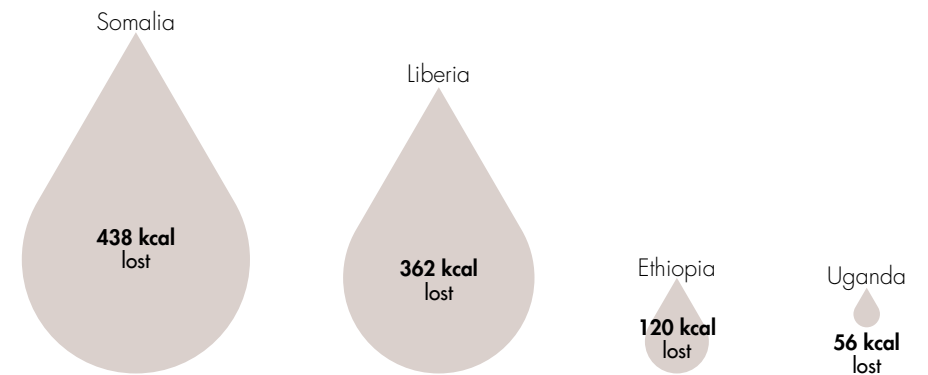
**9** In 2014, **children** constituted 51% of the refugee population, the highest percentage in more than a decade.



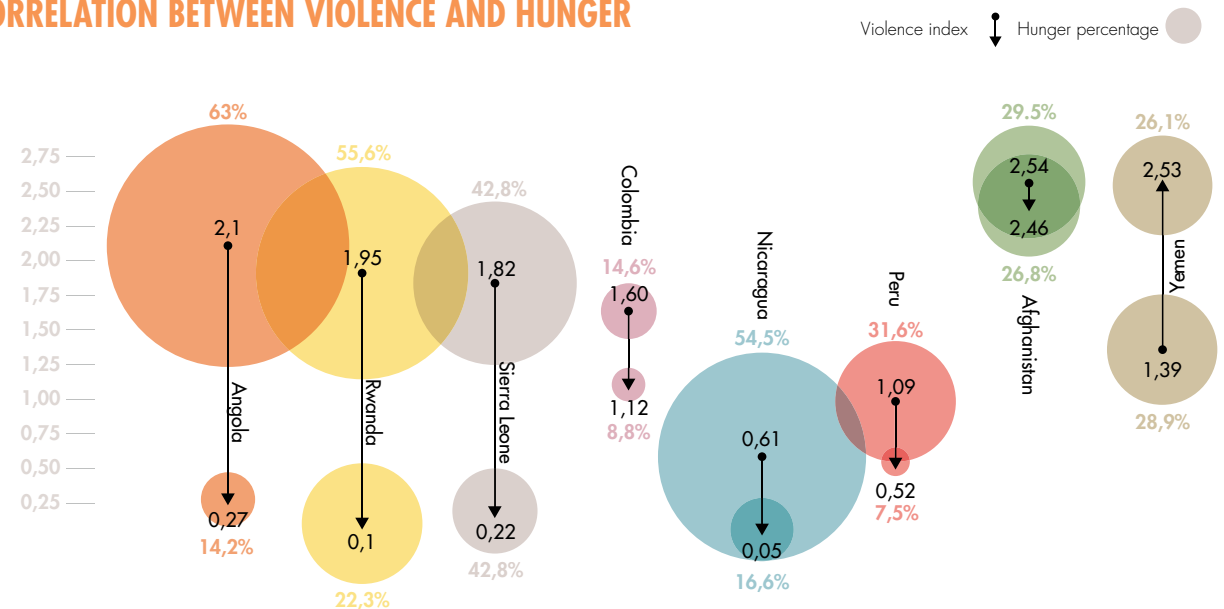
## CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND HUNGER ARE CLOSELY CORRELATED

### IMPACT OF LATE 20TH CENTURY CIVIL WARS ON HUNGER

in terms of average per capita lost food energy



### CORRELATION BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND HUNGER



# ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

It is critical to harness international assistance to boosting resilience, overcoming the divide between humanitarian and development investments. Targeted goals should be food security and the protection of rural livelihoods. Investment in agriculture can play a peace-making role.

## SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY DURING CONFLICT

Despite ongoing conflict, agricultural production is still possible in many parts of Syria. Even in the midst of the violence, FAO is operating in 13 of Syria's 14 governorates, working to help families stay on their land when it is safe to do so, and continue producing food to feed themselves, their communities and the country.

With improved seeds from FAO, farmers are able to make the most of cultivable areas. In 2015, despite enormous challenges and constraints, Syrian farmers produced 2.4 million tonnes of wheat – around 60% of the pre-

conflict average. Backyard production kits are enabling conflict-affected families to produce nutritious food close to their homes with a quick turnaround, and earn much-needed income.

Poultry packages have been particularly important for women – who often have little or no income, and are traditionally responsible for poultry keeping in Syria. Moreover, micro-gardens are helping displaced families to cultivate vegetables, roots, tubers and herbs wherever they are and without the use of land. Such activities have the potential to improve household nutrition, but they also ease increasing pressures on host communities, and thus help reduce tensions, especially where food supplies and markets are severely strained.

## INFORMATION FOR EARLY ACTION

Informing stakeholders and building technical consensus on the severity of food insecurity is vital, particularly during conflicts when access may be compromised.

FAO together with 11 partners including UN agencies, international NGOs, donor-related bodies and regional intergovernmental bodies working on food security, promote a common approach and standards for food security analysis through the Integrated Food Security Phase

**FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE SHOULD BE SUPPORTED ACROSS THE CONFLICT CYCLE**

## SOUTH SUDAN

Hunger is rampant among refugees.  
©FAO/Burgeon



# ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

► Classification (IPC). IPC is a set of standardized tools currently used in over 20 countries to generate evidence and information on the severity and causes of food and nutrition crises as well as persistent food insecurity.

FAO plays a fundamental role in raising the flag and in mobilising global and national responses when conflicts impact food security. Only when the IPC team declared famine (the fifth and worst level on the IPC scale) in July 2011 did the humanitarian and development community decide to intervene at scale in Somalia. These interventions may have prevented massive starvation, and slowly created the conditions for recovery, but responses came late. Some months prior to the famine declaration, FAO and partners had flagged that the situation was deteriorating, with many communities already in IPC Phase 4 (humanitarian emergency). Many of the 250,000 deaths that occurred due to famine in Somalia in late 2010 and 2011 could have been avoided had the international community been more responsive to early warnings from the IPC.

IPC reports are a key tool, informing decisions by a wide range of Government, UN, NGO and humanitarian fora. In Central African Republic and South Sudan the IPC has helped to coordinate and prioritise

humanitarian assistance for food security, helping to mitigate the humanitarian impact of recent conflicts (see figure).

## SUPPORTING REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

When families are displaced by armed conflict, communities become resource-poor, and livelihood opportunities and food sources become very limited. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes aim to support the voluntary disarmament and discharge of combatants from armed groups. FAO works closely with UN peace-building and peace-keeping actors reintegrating former combatants in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and the Philippines. Since 2005, FAO has been actively engaged in the rehabilitation of agriculture- and fisheries-based livelihoods in conflict-affected and disaster-affected areas in Mindanao.

Most of the combatants from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines belong to farming and fishing households and those wanting to

return to a life of peace could not do so, owing to a lack of access to land and the capital required to restore their livelihoods. Facilitating a return to farming or fishing was therefore key to the successful reintegration of former MILF combatants and displaced households.

However, replacing lost productive assets was not enough. There was also a need to transition from subsistence farming to more sustainable

livelihoods. For the transition period, FAO's interventions supported smallholder farmers and marginal fishers — including decommissioned MILF combatants and women, as they constituted the largest segments of the workforce — by enhancing their capacity to jumpstart their livelihoods, providing an understanding of how markets work, facilitating their access to improved production systems and making their farms more climate-resilient.

## CONTROLLING DISEASE, CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE

In 2011, the world was officially declared free of the scourge of Rinderpest, a deadly livestock disease. Eradicating Rinderpest contributed to improvements in food security for livestock- ►



NIGER

Women return to their homes with flour and beans supplied by FAO. ©FAO/Sanogo

## FOOD AND AGRICULTURE HELP MANAGE CONFLICT RISKS

# ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

► dependent communities – but the campaign also contributed to peace and security.

Conflict has profound implications for animal health, and for access to milk, meat and blood, and livestock ownership. These impacts directly affect food security and nutrition, while food insecurity can lead to vicious, multi-decade long cycles of violent cattle raiding. Eliminating Rinderpest would not have been possible without a conflict-sensitive approach to animal health, as the last vestiges of the disease were harboured in communities plagued by revenge cycles of violent livestock raids. In East Africa, community-based animal health workers negotiated peace pacts between rival pastoral groups, both in order to gain access to vulnerable herds and as a pre-condition for Rinderpest vaccinations.

This highlights the positive relationship between support for food and agriculture and the management of conflict risks in the interest of both food security and peace. Across the Sahel and elsewhere FAO vaccination campaigns offer an important channel in which to build social trust, confidence and establish intercommunity dialogue.

## MITIGATING AND PREVENTING PASTORALIST CONFLICT

The cross-border pastoralist communities of Kenya and Uganda have a hotspot for inter-tribal conflicts for many years. The conflicts are mainly linked to cattle raiding among the Pokot tribe in Kenya and the Karamojong in Uganda. This has been compounded by consecutive years of drought in the region.

FAO has been strengthening the capacity of pastoral communities most vulnerable to drought through setting up Pastoralist Field Schools (PFS) as a way to not only help reduce and prevent inter-community conflicts, but also to promote a learning environment where community members exchange information, best practices, and learn about grassroots ways of coping with drought risks and related challenges.

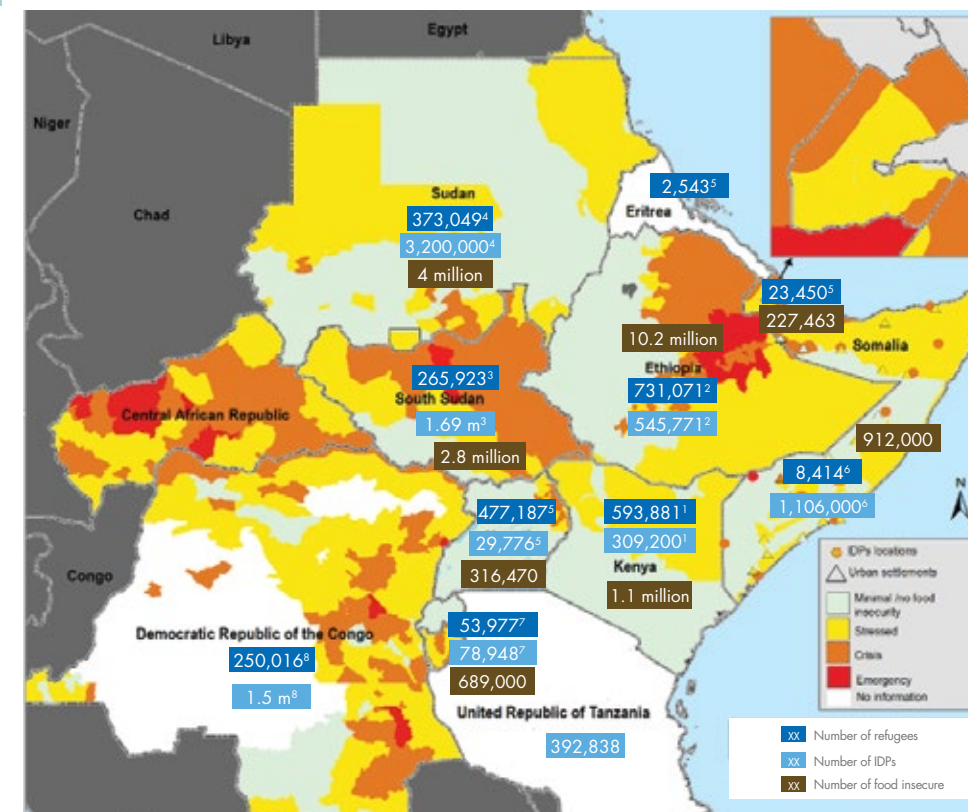
To contribute to wider peace-building efforts, FAO conducted successful PFS exchange visits between communities on each side of the border to help mitigate the frequent livestock raiding. Although most PFS members

feared to meet with their long-standing enemies, the exchange visits have been a big success. Through songs, presentations and dances, the groups discussed several issues including livestock management, breeding, and conflict resolution.

Such exchanges have not only mitigated negative attitudes between communities, but the learning and experimentation on broader community issues has proved highly critical in building the communities' resilience to conflict and natural disaster related shocks.

## INVESTING IN RURAL LIVELIHOODS CONSOLIDATES PEACE

## FOOD INSECURITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE REGION - FEBRUARY 2016



## REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SITUATION

The current food and nutrition insecure population in the region increased by 11 per cent from 18.2 million people at the end of 2015 to 20.4 million people by February 2016. The food security emergency in central/eastern Ethiopia follows the worst drought in more than 50 years. ICPAC and global climate partners predict that the ongoing El Nino will remain strong but weakening well into mid-2016 before scaling down to neutral. However, the humanitarian impact is expected to last until the end of 2016.

## PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LAND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Participatory Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD) is a confidence-building, facilitated dialogue approach that brings together different and often opposed stakeholders to the negotiation table to discuss and seek solutions to issues around

land tenure, customary land rights and the sustainable use of natural resources.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, land disputes represent 80% of all conflicts in the eastern part of the country. A joint UN Habitat-FAO-UNDP project using the PNTD approach has helped to reduce land-based disagreements. The main contesting parties - for example, land administration and customary authorities, farmers, private actors and

armed groups – are engaged in a participatory territorial analysis to help identify underlying causes around natural resource access. The history, perceptions and interests of different parties are captured, and from this a socio-territorial agreement (STA) is negotiated. The STA foresees a series of specific duties, rights and responsibilities concerning the access, use and management of land. Customary and formal institutions monitor implementation. Land disputes related to refugee return and IDPs have decreased.

# ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

This represents the beginning of a process with clear peace dividends, with its legitimacy rooted in inclusive dialogue among concerned stakeholders. Additional technical interventions, such as community nurseries, help build local capacities and strengthen nascent social cohesion.

## STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AMIDST CONFLICT

The protracted conflict in Darfur, Sudan since 2003 has resulted in massive loss of human life and assets, disrupted livelihoods and led to severe food insecurity in some areas. An estimated 60% out of a total population of 7-8 million is displaced. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and their host communities have limited livelihood options and often rely on unsustainable coping strategies, such as the unmanaged cutting of trees and shrubs for fuelwood and charcoal production. This places an additional burden on Darfur's fragile ecosystem, making natural resources a potential conflict trigger.

Fuelwood is the main source of energy for the vast majority of people in the Darfur region.

Access to and availability of this natural resource is increasingly limited and the effects of overexploitation already impact many parts of the region. The risk of inter-group conflict over scarce forest and tree resources is increased. Women have to venture far – up to 13 kilometres, three times a week – to collect enough firewood to cook, exposing themselves to the risk of physical and sexual

**SIGNIFICANT PEACE DIVIDENDS CAN BE EARNED FROM AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY AND FOOD SECURITY**

violence. This reduces time for necessary childcare and other productive tasks.

Fuel-efficient stoves reduce fuel consumption per meal, and cut smoke emissions from traditional fires. The materials used to make the stoves are available locally, supporting replicability and cost-efficiency. Local production and sales of fuel-efficient stoves become an income-generating activity for women.

The use of fuel-efficient stoves confirms that they have numerous cross-sectoral benefits, including supporting resilient livelihoods, improving nutrition and health, contributing to forest conservation and environmental protection, and fighting climate change by reducing carbon emissions. From a human security perspective, this kind of approach decreases the risks of sexual and gender-based violence women face when collecting fuelwood, and helps reduce conflict over scarce natural resources between host communities and displaced people.

Promoted by FAO since the 1990s, improved mud stoves are now widely used and training continues to be delivered by partners and local trainers, providing a sustainable, multi-faceted solution in conflict-affected and protracted crisis situations.

# RESOURCES

## PEACE, CONFLICT AND FOOD SECURITY: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE LINKAGES?

FAO, Technical Note, March 2016.

This note provides a succinct summary of the main literature and some evidence on the hunger-conflict-peace relationship. Several aspects of the relationship between food, hunger, peace and conflict have been well explored and documented. First, the adverse impact of conflict on hunger and food security tends to be strong and this finding is uncontested. Second, there is evidence that high food prices and lack of access to food have contributed to political instability and civil strife. This relationship needs to be more carefully considered and nuanced. Third, there are indications that food security and improved rural livelihoods may contribute to the mitigation and prevention of conflicts and to securing sustainable peace. However, the nature and strength of this relationship has been underexplored. Yet, what is also clear from the literature is that a deeper exploration of the relationships between conflict-food security-peace would strengthen the basis for designing effective interventions.

## ONE HUMANITY, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Report of the UN Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, 2016

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Secretary-General's%20Report%20for%20WHS%202016%20\(Avance%20Unedited%20Draft\).pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Secretary-General's%20Report%20for%20WHS%202016%20(Avance%20Unedited%20Draft).pdf)

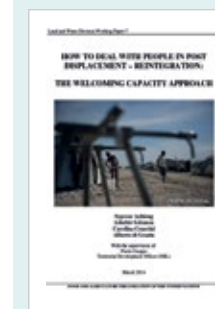


The growing number of people in crisis, the dramatic increase in funding requirements, and the fact that humanitarian aid organizations created to offer urgent life-saving assistance are increasingly tied down providing services year after year, to people who may never go home, in countries whose road to peace may be arduous and long, urgently call for change: Changes that reach those left furthest behind, that promotes self-reliance, that allows people to act as primary agents of their own destiny, and changes in the way governments, local communities, the private sector and aid organizations work together for people in crisis.

## HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE IN POST-DISPLACEMENT – REINTEGRATION

FAO Working Paper, 2014

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-mj732e.pdf>



In conflict situations, peace settlements and cease-fire agreements may often, end violent conflicts, but relapse can occur because sometimes there is no peace to keep. The right approach on land issues can support sustainable peace. While humanitarian agencies frequently face pervasive questions on land issues, national governments often consider land as too sensitive and outside their mandates. The Welcoming Capacity Approach, originated from FAO's intervention in Angola in 1999, where millions of Internally Displaced Persons had needs to secure access to land that required negotiations with local rights holders, and enriched by lessons learned in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and Sudan, offers a way forward.

## RESOURCES

**FAO AND THE 17 SDGs**

FAO, 2015

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4997e.pdf>

This booklet offers an overview of how FAO well positioned to support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and shows how most of these are related to FAO's work.

**THE STATE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE WORLD**

FAO, 2010

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1683e/i1683e.pdf>

This flagship FAO report, on addressing food insecurity in protracted crises, emphasizes how each case requires special attention due to the way local response capacities erode. Protracted crises are not a series of one-off shocks and can derail longer-term development paths. They are lasting threats to both lives and livelihoods. Building longer-term assistance activities on the back of existing or revitalized local institutions offers the best hope of long-term sustainability and improved food security. Social protection - school meals, cash or food-for-work activities - can make a vital difference in the long term.

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY: Risks and responses**

FAO, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5188e.pdf>

This paper provides an overview of the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition and explores ways to reduce negative impacts through adaptation and resilience. It underscores how climate change is already impacting the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable people and suggests potential responses will go beyond technical agronomics and include social protection and strengthened international cooperation.

**TOO IMPORTANT TO FAIL****Addressing the humanitarian financing gap**

High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the Secretary-General, 2015

<http://www.un.org/news/WEB-1521765-E-OCHA-Report-on-Humanitarian-Financing.pdf>

The world today spends around US\$ 25 billion to provide life-saving assistance to 125 million people devastated by wars and natural disasters. That's 12 times more than 15 years ago, but the generosity

**FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN PROTRACTED CRISES**

Committee on World Food Security (CFS), 2015

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1415/FFA/CFS\\_FFA\\_Final\\_Draft\\_Ver2\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1415/FFA/CFS_FFA_Final_Draft_Ver2_EN.pdf)

Eliminating hunger and undernutrition in protracted crisis situations requires special attention as responses differ from those in short-term crises or non-crisis development contexts, affirms this document, approved by the inclusive intergovernmental CFS. Each protracted crisis is different, but shared critical manifestations include disruption of livelihoods and food systems along with displaced people, severe food insecurity and malnourishment.

is far from sufficient. This expert report recognizes that addressing the root causes of humanitarian needs is the best way to shrink them and argues that as development is the best resilience-builder of all, funds for that should go where they matter most – situations of fragility – and that funds dedicated for peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the international level should be harnessed to systematic investment in resilience-building. It also suggests ways to expand the resource base for humanitarian assistance.

All FAO publications can be accessed at [www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)

**PARTICIPATORY NEGOTIATED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT**

FAO Working Paper, 2009

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-ak545e.pdf>

FAO's PNTD, the product of years of experience and successfully tested in five continents, is a facilitative process striving for rural development through negotiating, participation and dialogue in the wake of conflict, one which considers socio-political aspects to be just as important as technical and economic elements in the effort to eradicate poverty and hunger. Geared to land management and land tenure, this bottom-up approach entails FAO acting as a disinterested referee in negotiations designed to include vulnerable and marginal populations, build credibility between public and private actors and strengthen social cohesion, even on issues tangential to the process itself.

**THE IMPACT OF DISASTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY**

FAO, 2015

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5128e.pdf>

Natural disasters worldwide in the decade from 2003 to 2013 cost some \$1.5 trillion in economic damages, and their frequency and severity is rising.

**EVALUATION OF FAO'S CONTRIBUTION IN CRISIS-RELATED TRANSITION****Linking Relief to Development**

FAO, 2014

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml922e.pdf>

This assessment favourably judges FAO's very active move towards integrating the larger "Resilience Agenda" into its transition work and suggests its focus on food and agriculture allows FAO to position itself as the ideal transition agency in situations of crisis response of all types. In that light it offers a series of recommendations, arguing it is impossible for FAO to succeed without confronting and helping constructive shape difficult socio-political realities if it is to be fully effective in assisting populations whose livelihoods are most put at risk by crises. In particular, it says FAO's own self-assessment must henceforth be guided by asking "Did we improve the lives of the poor and hungry?" rather than "Did we manage to deliver what we planned?"

In this study FAO shows that almost a quarter of the damages and losses caused by such disasters in developing countries fell on the agriculture sector, which is the main source of livelihoods and food security in those countries as well as a key driver of economic growth. Governments must design measures specific to the crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry subsectors.

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