Conflict and hunger

“I’m not sick, I’m hungry” said a South Sudanese woman, while a camp hospital doctor was putting her on an intrave- nous feeding drip. She was suffer- ing from diarrhoea caused by acute malnutrition and her body was no longer able to absorb nutrients. After several weeks of fasting, her four-year-old daughter, who was sleeping next to her, died. The root cause was a severe drought in the region that had lasted for three years, leading to a food crisis. As a result, the woman had to leave her village and seek refuge in a nearby town. She now lives in a camp for displaced people and depends on food aid to survive. Her family is one of many affected by the conflict in South Sudan. Nyalen is only one of the millions of people who have been displaced or uprooted because their livelihoods have been destroyed by conflict. Many of these people are children, who are often the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of conflict. In South Sudan, for example, the present situation in Syria.

Peace and Food Security Supplement by FAO

FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, addresses the United Nations Security Council on 30 March.

FAO will provide reports to the UN Security Council on Food Security

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Sowing food security, reaping peace

by José Graziano Da Silva

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FOOD SECURITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE REGION

**FOOD INSECURITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE REGION**

 FAO’s main goal is to achieve food security, end hunger in the world and protect rural and sustainable livelihoods. It aims to create resilience in countries in vulnerable situations, bearing in mind that agriculture can play a vital role in peacefully ending conflicts. In fact, FAO offers its leadership, its expertise, knowledge and hundreds of projects on the ground to fill its aim of fostering an end to disputes.

**INFORMATION FOR EARLY ACTION**

Informing stakeholders and building technical consensus on the severity of food insecurity is vital, particularly during conflicts. FAO, together with 11 partners including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and regional intergovernmental bodies, promotes a common approach and standards for food security analysis through the Integrated Food Security Phase 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. Only when the IPC team declared famine in Somalia in July 2011 and FAO decided to alert the international community was mass starvation prevented in the country. The call for international aid stopped a situation of mass starvation and slowly created the conditions for recovery. Unfortunately, responses arrived late. Many of the 200,000 deaths that occurred due to famine in Somalia in late 2011 and 2012 could have been avoided had the international community been more responsive to early warnings from the IPC. Since then, the IPC has become a key tool in decision making – and these decisions are not made in vain.

**SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA**

In South Sudan, FAO has helped to coordinate and prioritise humanitarian assistance, helping local people in the immediate aftermath of conflicts. Contributing to sustainability is an essential element in FAO’s work towards peace. For example, FAO support in building fuel-efficient mud stoves in Darfur meant that trees did not need to be cut down. As well as being sustainable, this practice creates jobs, generating vital income for families, as well as including women in social and work environments, improving energy efficiency and improving health. The programmes in South Sudan and South Sudan are just two of the many examples of FAO’s work in the Horn of Africa, which also includes the early identification of livestock diseases in livestock and investment to create sustainable fishing.

Eradicating vulnerable populations is another important tool for FAO to improve the capacity for recovery during and after war. This means, above all, adapting programmes to women’s needs, given that they are almost always the ones to take on additional responsibilities during conflict situations, and to the young, whose access to employment is always vital for sustainable development.

**THE COUNTRYSIDE, THE MAIN VICTIM OF CONFLICT**

It is important to bear in mind that contemporary civil wars frequently take place in the countryside, and in the long term weaken the entire agricultural infrastructure. For example, to mitigate the effects of civil war, FAO is helping the government of Sierra Leone to implement the SEED programme (Seed Enterprise Enhancement and Development), helping to produce high-quality seeds and so initiate the sustainable development of industrial seed production. This is not all. Once conflicts have ended, problems continue, especially in terms of land management. In the Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development scheme, projects set up negotiating tables for the various parties who are often at odds, but are in agreement about the need to make land tenure more secure and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. Participatory communication can be crucial and have significant benefits in promoting gender equality, social participation and community governments in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Burundi and Ghana, where FAO works along these lines. A separate, yet similar situation is happening in Colombia, a country where FAO is working with the government to build lasting peace, following 50 years of conflict. FAO has managed work in the area of food security and nutrition since 2007 and is working with the Colombian authorities to consolidate the peace agreement.

**REFUGEES**

FAO is working more and more to improve food security for refugees, a task requiring both hard work to calibrate the needs of refugees, a task requiring both hard work to calibrate the needs of refugees, and also the production of eggs to eat at home and increase protein intake, while families could also sell any surplus at local markets or use them to barter. This is not the only project in the country. In 2015, despite enormous challenges and constraints, Syrian farmers produced 2.4 million tonnes of wheat – around 60% of the pre-conflict average. The Organization has provided wheat and barley seeds to farming families who will produce 119,000 tonnes of grain this summer. It has also provided veterinary assistance to more than nine million animals in order to reduce the risk of disease in livestock, thereby protecting herds and flocks. Despite the 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, and it is not only working in Syria. In Lebanon, FAO has set up field schools, helping to train Leba- nese farmers to increase production to feed the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in the country. As ever, FAO continues to call on the international community to take action to help Syria, to end the conflict and bring peace to the country.

**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 but the campaign also contributed to peace and security in the wider population. When conflict has profound implications for animal health, it also limits access to milk and meat, and livestock ownership which has a direct impact on food security and nutrition. Eliminating Rinderpest would not have been possible without a conflict-sensitive approach to animal health, as the last vestiges of the disease were found in communities where conflicts had been triggered by disputes over livestock in East Africa, animal health workers negotiated peace pacts between rival pastoral groupings as a pre-condition for Rinderpest vaccinations. This highlights the positive relationship between support for food and agriculture and the management of conflict risks.
Facts and figures to understand the relationship between conflict and food security

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. 93% of people living in extreme poverty are in countries that are politically fragile, environmentally vulnerable, or both.

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

4. Conflicts concerning natural resources are twice as probable to recur in the five years after hostilities and compared with conflicts where natural resources are not an issue.

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

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. 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.

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

9. Conflict also affects schooling. Rural Mayan women in Guatemala exposed to the country’s civil war (1985-1997) received 30% less schooling compared to older and younger generations.

10. Every day in 2014, conflicts and violence forced approximately 45,500 people to flee their homes and seek safety either internally or across borders. Very few refugees, only 1%, have returned, less than at any point over the past 30 years.

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

12. 20% of school-age children live in countries in conflict. Instability raises the risk of child labour, especially in its most dangerous and violent forms.

Although the link between conflict and food security varies according to the territory affected, in general terms it is food systems and the production of food that are disrupted. Where there is armed conflict and instability, crops and livestock are frequently plundered, and income and assets are lost. As a consequence, people’s access to food is directly affected.}

CAN FOOD INSECURITY LEAD TO CONFLICT?

It is true that food can be a source of conflict but it is never the sole factor behind a dispute. There are certain factors related to food insecurity that can foster conflict, such as the plundering of land or livestock or the sudden rise in the cost of foodstuffs. However, conflicts only arise when they are accompanied by other problems and in a context of social unrest, where much more comes into play.

PEACE AND FOOD SECURITY

The consolidation of peace is vital for food security and nutrition. Little is known about how, and to what extent, improved food security could prevent conflict, and build and sustain peace. Yet, what we know for certain is that food aid, social protection and food security contribute significantly to peacebuilding in areas once at war.

FAO data show that, on average, the proportion of people who are undernourished is almost three times as high in countries in protracted crisis than in other developing countries. While protracted crises are typically caused by multiple factors, conflict is nearly always one of them. Not all countries in protracted crisis present very high levels of undernourishment because crises are localized to certain areas or regions, rather than taking place across an entire country. In 2013, there were approximately 167 million undernourished people in countries in protracted crisis – roughly 21% of the world’s undernourished people live in areas with long-standing difficulties.

FOOD, HUNGER, PEACE AND CONFLICT

The relationship between food, hunger, peace and conflict has been well explored and documented. First, conflict tends to have a strong adverse impact on hunger and food security, 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 sparked new civil conflicts, although in such cases the relationship is more nuanced.

Food security and an improvement in rural livelihoods can also help to mitigate and prevent conflict, ensuring sustainable peace. This relationship between food security and peace has not been explored fully. Although studies into conflicts, food security and peace have a long way to go, results to date make it clear that this complex relationship should be studied further so we can create effective assistance programmes.

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Key issues

**CONFLICTS AND FOOD SECURITY**

Most conflicts mainly affect rural areas and their populations. This is particularly true for civil conflicts, which today are the most common and most dangerous and violent forms. The consequences of conflict on food security and nutrition are clear and undeniable. In fact, conflicts are the main cause of food insecurity and malnutrition. The effects on personal development are immediate but long-lasting: malnutrition tends to affect children the most and may cause them long-term physical and physical handicaps.

**THE PROPORTION OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE IS ABOUT THREE TIMES HIGHER IN COUNTRIES IN PROTRACTED CRISIS (percentage of undernourished in 2012-14)**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Impact of Civil War</th>
<th>Lost</th>
<th>Proportion of Lost</th>
<th>Source: FAO, 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td></td>
<td>438 kcal</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td></td>
<td>362 kcal</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td></td>
<td>120 kcal</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
<td>56 kcal</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
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**CORRELATION BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND HUNGER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1,39</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1,95</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1,60</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td>16.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1,09</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
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<td>14.2%</td>
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<td>Angola</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<td>1,09%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
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<td>1,09%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2,75</td>
<td>1,09%</td>
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**THE PROPORTION OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE IS ABOUT THREE TIMES HIGHER IN COUNTRIES IN PROTRACTED CRISIS (percentage of undernourished in 2012-14)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage undernourished</th>
<th>Countries in protracted crisis</th>
<th>China and India</th>
<th>Other developing countries</th>
<th>Source: FAO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>40</td>
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**STATE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE WORLD**

FAO, 2015
The impact of conflict on food security

Mortality caused by conflict through food insecurity and famine far exceeds deaths caused by direct violence. To put it another way, hunger and the lack of food security cause more deaths than direct violence. An estimated 12 million to 20 million more deaths occur each year than are directly caused by conflict or terrorism.

MANY KINDS OF HARM
Conflict entails enormous multifaceted costs, including direct human suffering and catastrophic socioeconomic disruption, which can significantly impede economic and social progress. Most conflicts mainly affect rural areas and their populations, with a heavy impact on agricultural production and rural livelihoods. This is particularly true for civil war, which in recent years have become the most common form of armed conflict. The harm done to food security is not easily measured but is worrisome seriously. Conflict can reduce the amount of food available, disrupt people’s access to food, families’ access to food preparation facilities and health care, and increase uncertainty about satisfying future needs for food and nutrition. The impact of conflict on poverty is clear. Poverty rates are 20 percentage points higher in countries that have not lived in peace. Normally, countries with a higher degree of poverty also live through violent conflicts. A high risk of a conflict is a risk on the health of the most vulnerable countries.

Central African Republic and Chad are among the worst-sloping countries in terms of poverty, and unsurprisingly both have experienced violent conflict and political instability in recent years. In contrast, in Angola, Ethiopia and Rwanda, hunger levels have fallen substantially since their large scale civil wars of the 1990s and 2000s ended. Ethiopia was still considered in protracted crisis in 2010, but major progress in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1c target of halving the proportion of undernourished people in its population, thanks to sustained political commitment and efforts to improve food production and nutrition. Members regularly informed regarding the food situation in the world’s most crisis-hit countries. Eradicating hunger is, then, not only a moral obligation, but also something vital to guarantee a future for all of us. Improving food security can help to construct a sustainable peace, and even prevent future conflicts. We know that action promoting food security can help to prevent crises, mitigate their impact, and foster post-conflict recovery. It is clear that for us to prevent conflict, we must address their root causes, and amongst these are hunger and food insecurity.

Conflicts are a key factor in prolonged food security crises and the vicious circle is repeated time and again. During conflicts people are three times more likely to suffer hunger than in the rest of the developing world, while those countries that suffered the highest level of food insecurity are also those countries most affected by conflicts. This is evidenced in examples from Syria and Yemen to South Sudan.

Other examples demonstrate that peace and food security are mutually dependent, such as post-conflict Angola and Nicaragua, or Rwanda after the genocide and East Timor after gaining independence. Without food security, there is the danger of relapsing into violence.

If attempts to secure food security fail, attempts to stabilize society come under threat: a threat currently facing Yemen and also Central African Republic, where half of the population suffer food insecurity. This was in fact the main subject of a conversation between the FAO and the United Nations Security Council in February 2016. The new President of the Central African Republic, Faustin Archange Touadera. He asked for FAO’s support to help disarm and reintegrate armed groups in the country successfully, intensifying efforts in the agricultural sector so that the sector can meet the population’s basic needs.

Promoting rural development can also help efforts to build peace. A specific, current example is FAO’s joint work with the Colombian government to implement programmes to improve food security and rural development quickly in an attempt to consolidate the anticipated peace agreement.

International efforts towards peace will be more effective if they include measures to build resilience in families and communities, just as it is their livelihoods that conflicts harm most.

However, to achieve all of this, hunger, at the heart of a great number of conflicts, should be considered a matter of global security.

by Enrique Yeves

Food insecurity, at the heart of a great number of conflicts, should be considered a matter of world security if the international community wants to succeed in achieving long-lasting peace.

Desperate, frustrated, and with little hope for the future, on 17th December 2010, the Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi doused himself in petrol and set himself alight. This began the popular revolution that toppled the dictatorship of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, in power since 1987, and with it a domino effect that spread across North Africa and the Middle East.

The events took place in the small city of Sidi Bouzid but they could have taken place in any other part of the world so deeply affected by the high price of goods as basic and vital as bread. Paradoxically, Mohamed sold fruit and his dream was to buy a van and see his business grow. The global food price crisis in 2008 coincided with revolts in over 40 countries and the fall of several governments such as in Egypt and Libya, highlighting the link between food security and political instability. The protests in Tunisia and other countries were initially demonstrations against the high price of food. This was not the only cause but rather the trigger of a broad-based public indignation, although there was a common denominator.

In 2011, a similar rise in food prices led to new internal conflicts or escalated old ones in many countries, as can be seen in the diagram accompanying this article, where the price of foodstuffs reaches extreme levels, political instability and civil unrest are found.

The lack of food, or to be more precise, the ability to acquire food – that is, poverty – is one of the most immediate threats to security and to people’s lives in conflicts, and at the same time makes them more deaths than direct violence. An estimated 12 million to 20 million more deaths occur each year than are directly caused by conflict or terrorism. In contrast, in Angola, Ethiopia and Rwanda, hunger levels have fallen substantially since their large scale civil wars of the 1990s and 2000s ended. Ethiopia was still considered in protracted crisis in 2010, but major progress in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1c target of halving the proportion of undernourished people in its population, thanks to sustained political commitment and efforts to improve food production and nutrition. Members regularly informed regarding the food situation in the world’s most crisis-hit countries. Eradicating hunger is, then, not only a moral obligation, but also something vital to guarantee a future for all of us. Improving food security can help to construct a sustainable peace, and even prevent future conflicts. We know that action promoting food security can help to prevent crises, mitigate their impact, and foster post-conflict recovery. It is clear that for us to prevent conflict, we must address their root causes, and amongst these are hunger and food insecurity.

Conflicts are a key factor in prolonged food security crises and the vicious circle is repeated time and again. During conflicts people are three times more likely to suffer hunger than in the rest of the developing world, while those countries that suffered the highest level of food insecurity are also those countries most affected by conflicts. This is evidenced in examples from Syria and Yemen to South Sudan.

Other examples demonstrate that peace and food security are mutually dependent, such as post-conflict Angola and Nicaragua, or Rwanda after the genocide and East Timor after gaining independence. Without food security, there is the danger of relapsing into violence.

If attempts to secure food security fail, attempts to stabilize society come under threat: a threat currently facing Yemen and also Central African Republic, where half of the population suffer food insecurity. This was in fact the main subject of a conversation between the FAO and the United Nations Security Council in February 2016. The new President of the Central African Republic, Faustin Archange Touadera. He asked for FAO’s support to help disarm and reintegrate armed groups in the country successfully, intensifying efforts in the agricultural sector so that the sector can meet the population’s basic needs.

Promoting rural development can also help efforts to build peace. A specific, current example is FAO’s joint work with the Colombian government to implement programmes to improve food security and rural development quickly in an attempt to consolidate the anticipated peace agreement.

International efforts towards peace will be more effective if they include measures to build resilience in families and communities, just as it is their livelihoods that conflicts harm most.

However, to achieve all of this, hunger, at the heart of a great number of conflicts, should be considered a matter of global security.