Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

January 1996

TACKLING HUNGER IN A WORLD FULL OF FOOD: TASKS AHEAD FOR FOOD AID

This paper was prepared by the World Food Programme, in response to a request from the Director-General of FAO, as part of the technical preparations for the World Food Summit. It is circulated in advance for review and comments. It will be drawn upon in preparing the technical document on food assistance in support of food security.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

January 1996

TACKLING HUNGER IN A WORLD FULL OF FOOD: TASKS AHEAD FOR FOOD AID

This paper was prepared by the World Food Programme, in response to a request from the Director-General of FAO, as part of the technical preparations for the World Food Summit. It is circulated in advance for review and comments. It will be drawn upon in preparing the technical document on food assistance in support of food security.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. Food security is about people. Hunger on a global scale reminds us of the unfinished task of achieving sustainable food security for everyone, everywhere. Adequacy of food at a national level does not rule out hunger. The important goal of raising agricultural productivity is only one part of the solution. The attainment of food security involves eliminating current hunger facing hundreds of millions of people today, and reducing the risks of future hunger.

ii. This paper argues that hunger is unacceptable in a world of plenty. Every effort must be taken to address both the symptoms and causes of hunger among the 800 million people who are undernourished today. The precise number of today's hungry people who can best be helped through targeted food aid remains to be determined. Nevertheless, this paper identifies three main categories of hunger in which food aid can play a principal role in helping households attain food security.

iii. The first category comprises people facing acute hunger - victims of conflict and natural disasters. To people such as these, survival supersedes thoughts of long-term development; there is no longer-term solution without first a short-term solution. Action against acute hunger is therefore the first priority in addressing food insecurity; hungry people cannot wait for longer-term gains in productivity to resolve their problems.

iv. Secondly, there are people with critical needs at special times of the life cycle, including the new-born, infants, and child-bearing/lactating women. Those yet to be born suffer a lack of nutrients if their mothers are themselves malnourished since the "programming" of chronic diseases among adults starts with malnutrition among women during pregnancy. If constraints at birth are compounded by a continued lack of food, the danger of mortality is great. Children who survive severe malnutrition early in their lives are likely to become disadvantaged adults prone to remain poor, food insecure, and the probable victims of future emergencies. Actions taken to address the current hunger of mothers and young children therefore have a significant outcome on food security in the longer-run.

v. The third group, which partly overlaps with the first two, includes people with low and variable incomes, limited assets, few marketable skills, deficient purchasing power, and a lack of powerful advocates - the chronically undernourished. Hunger among such people is not just a manifestation of poverty, it is also a cause of their poverty. Removing current hunger is thus the first threshold to be crossed in eradicating poverty and establishing food security.

vi. All three forms of hunger are universal. Recent tragedies in Eastern Europe and the Republics of the former USSR show that no part of the globe is immune to hunger if conditions lend themselves to massive failures in access to food and health. However, the above three categories of hunger tend to be concentrated in remoter parts of the developing world that are served by poorly-functioning markets and have low agricultural productivity, high fertility rates, and a risk of natural disaster. These are the very regions in which limited economic returns tend to discourage capital investments, and which governments and donors find the most difficult to reach. The structural problems of such regions are increasingly compounded by humanitarian emergencies associated with armed conflict.

vii. Currently, most hungry people are found in Low-Income Food-Deficit countries, particularly in southern and eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The latter region poses particular cause for concern, since over 40 percent of its population is chronically undernourished and it has recently faced an upsurge in emergencies. As armed conflict has taken over from drought as a primary cause

xii. What is more, food aid often reaches women and children more effectively than other kinds of assistance and supports an immediate improvement in their productivity. Feeding children through schools in the poorest regions of food-deficit countries has a pay-off in addressing current hunger as well as promoting longer-term human growth and productivity. Similarly, transferring food aid directly to women places a valuable, empowering resource in the hands of the person in the household most responsible for domestic food security. Women are more likely than men to use any additional income for ensuring a better diet for their family. The potential for food aid to bring assistance directly to needy women is great. Food aid often reaches hungry women where other resources do not. Food provided as wages or incentives often reaches women in food insecure households that may be 'crowded out' of projects offering cash resources.

xiii. Third, food aid must support actions against chronic hunger in regions where food insecure households are by-passed by mainstream development initiatives and where markets are weak. Hundreds of millions of people suffering chronic under-nutrition need assistance to overcome their current hunger, but in ways that allow them to become active participants in development. Deficiencies in household purchasing power and productivity can be addressed simultaneously through labour-intensive works programmes that transfer an income to food insecure households while building infrastructure or enhancing soil and water management. Thus, food aid is the ally not only of the hungry people of the world, but also of the productive activities and markets on which the hungry ultimately depend.

xiv. Targeted food aid is the essential resource for addressing the hunger of many millions of hungry people in food-deficit countries. But, for targeted food aid to adequately address much of today's hunger, the level of assistance reaching the hungry needs to be enhanced and protected from fluctuations in global supply, particularly in years of high world food prices.

CONTENTS

FOOD SECURITY: SUSTAINING PEOPLE

Introduction

1.1 Food security is about people. It is about the access required by all people at all times to safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. It is about a life free of the risks of malnutrition or starvation. In this sense attention is needed both to long-term goals of raising agricultural productivity and world food supplies, and to the short-term problem of hundreds of millions of individuals who go hungry today. Hunger is not just a manifestation of poverty, it perpetuates poverty. The attainment of food security therefore involves eliminating current hunger and reducing the risks of future hunger, not just ensuring the supply of food at a global level.

1.2 This paper elaborates priorities for food aid in a world of persistent hunger and increasingly complex humanitarian emergencies. Targeted food aid is the most important resource for addressing the urgent needs of many millions of hungry people in food-deficit countries. That said, food aid is not the answer to all hunger in the world. Some conditions of hunger are more appropriately tackled through interventions based on the targeted delivery of cash or other resources.

1.3 The exact number of hungry people who are best served through targeted food aid remains to be determined with precision. Nevertheless, this paper does identify three categories of hunger as priority areas in which targeted food aid should play a principal role in coming years in helping households to attain food security. This new thinking is an elaboration of recent discussions within the governing body of the World Food Programme (WFP)[1].

Times of plenty do not rule out hunger

1.4 Hunger is indefensible in a world full of food. At a time when sufficient food is produced at a global level to meet the needs of every individual alive, an estimated 800 million people suffer chronic undernutrition, and as many as 2 billion more people lack essential micro-nutrients[2]. The reality is that adequacy of food at a global, national or even regional level does not rule out serious hunger at the local level. With almost 100 million new people likely to be added to the world's population each year during the coming three decades, there is an urgent need to ensure that today's hunger is addressed today - not left for tomorrow when its severity and impact may be compounded.

1.5 Hunger has chronic, seasonal and short-term (acute) dimensions. Chronic hunger is a consequence of diets persistently inadequate in terms of quantity and/or quality, resulting from household poverty. Seasonal hunger is related to cycles of food-growing and harvesting. Acute hunger, by contrast, arises from absolute shortages of food, often due to climatic fluctuations or other natural disasters; or to inaccessibility of food because of armed conflict, or to a massive collapse in purchasing power associated with disruptions in labour or food markets.

1.6 While the dimensions, causes, and consequences of hunger differ widely even within the same country, all least-developed, food-deficit countries, and many middle-income countries contain hungry people. These people do not have uniform characteristics. Just as some regions of a country are devastated by drought while others are not, some people suffer extremes of hunger and others do not, even in the same household[3]. Three main categories of hunger are identified below.

---

1 WFP (1995a).

2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 1995a.

3 Webb and von Braun (1994)

The chronically poor and hungry

1.13 Thirdly, there are households with low and variable incomes, limited assets, few marketable skills, and few powerful advocates to act on their behalf - the chronically poor. These include many smallholder farmers, landless and/or daily labourers, livestock herders, and the unskilled unemployed. Numbering hundreds of millions, these people earn less than US$ 1 a day, of which roughly 70 percent tends to be spent on food consumption, and they subsist in a state of poverty that never rules out hunger.[9]

1.14 Persistent hunger, largely found in low-income food-deficit countries, is a stumbling block to efforts aimed at eliminating poverty, and is thereby self-perpetuating. Chronic hunger is part of a vicious cycle of low productivity and earnings, ill-health, indebtedness and malnutrition. Past investments made by vulnerable households are eroded by chronic hunger, and future incomes are also compromised. Hungry children cannot derive full benefits from their education, even if they manage to gain access to formal education. Poor women cannot invest sufficiently in their own, or their children's future, since they are fully preoccupied by the multiple problems associated with current hunger.

1.15 Overlapping with the group that faces persistent calorie shortages is an even larger number of people who suffer micronutrient deficiencies due largely to dietary inadequacies. Roughly two billion people are currently at risk of iodine deficiencies which can cause considerable brain damage and cretinism as well as goitre. Almost 500 million women are thought to suffer from iron deficiency anaemia, leading to poor health and low birth-weights. Over 200 million children experience inadequate consumption of vitamin A.[10] The latter is a deficiency responsible for mental and physical impairment among children, blindness and increased risk of death from common diseases.

1.16 Addressing such micronutrient deficiencies is a relatively inexpensive and cost effective exercise, particularly when compared to the scale of emergency interventions needed to respond to widespread nutritional failure. Ignoring mild symptoms of malnutrition today can lead to acute symptoms tomorrow.

The geography of hunger

1.17 Nowhere is immune to hunger if conditions lend themselves to massive failures in nutrition and health. Recent tragedies in Eastern Europe and the Republics of the former USSR have underlined this fact. That said, hunger affects certain people in certain places more than others. For example, acute hunger that can lead to famine tends not to be found in cities (unless they are placed under seige or devastated by conflict), or in regions of high agricultural output. Widespread, acute hunger has not been prevalent in temperate climates in the absence of war or discriminatory policies for 150 years. It tends not to be found where transaction costs for food marketing are low.

1.18 By contrast, the kinds of hunger that need to be addressed by targeted food aid are widely found in regions where economic returns to agriculture tend to be low, and in which there are high transactions costs due to deficient infrastructure and inefficient markets. This combination of risks is characteristic of the poorest countries of the world, particularly low-income, food-deficit countries located in the semi-arid, warm sub-humid and cool tropics.[11] Additional nutrition problems are to be found among impoverished households in urban slums worldwide. The latter are often attributable to insanitary living conditions and certain micronutrient deficiencies that may not be best tackled through food assistance.

---

9 WFP (1995a); FAO (1995b)

10 WHO (1992); UNICEF (1995)

11 Sharma et al. (1995); Rosegrant et al. (1995)

2.4 The rise in "complex emergencies" has meant that acute hunger is increasingly found in the presence of political instability which compounds inadequate past investments, infrastructure deficiencies, rapid population growth and environmental limitations to increased productivity. All of this makes the task of tackling hunger more difficult. The compounding of constraints to the attainment of food security is all-too apparent in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.5 As conflict has taken over from drought as the primary cause of famine and human displacement, the numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons and non-displaced but asset-stripped households has grown sharply, particularly in Africa. The total number of refugees has doubled approximately every six years since the mid-1970s. By 1994, the number had reached approximately 25 million, of whom roughly one third were found in Africa.[18] In addition, the number of Internally Displaced Persons reached an estimated 25-30 million in 1995, as many as 60 percent of them in Africa.[19] The global total of people up-rooted by conflict or political disturbance has reached roughly 50 million - an average of one million people for every conflict.

2.6 What is more, the impact of hunger due to conflict and population displacement is not limited to the individuals involved. Host communities, typically as poor as the poor coming to them for help, are drawn into the dislocation. The hosts are affected as commodity prices rise, labour markets are affected, local or national development activities are curtailed, and widespread natural resource damage results from new concentrations of displaced people needing land and fuel to survive. The recent growth in numbers of refugees and displaced people shows no signs of abating, and is the least responsive to progress made in the realms of food production or distribution. The solution to large-scale population displacements is typically political rather than simply economic or environmental.

The damage wrought by crises

2.7 The human, productivity, and opportunity costs of complex emergencies are too high, however measured. Households disrupted by armed conflict are vulnerable to hunger over long periods of time. Nations experiencing conflict see past gains in development eroded or destroyed.[20] Destruction in countries such as Mozambique, Cambodia or Nicaragua only adds to the cost of development investments in the future.

2.8 What is more, the resources dedicated to humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping and rehabilitation are increasing. Financial disbursements for interventions from OECD countries (excluding food aid) expanded from US$ 809 million in 1989 to US$ 3.2 billion in 1993.[21] The United Nations system allocated more than US$ 5 billion on peace-keeping operations between 1991 and 1995 - just in Africa.[22]

2.9 Growing more food is essential, but will not in itself solve the problem of hunger. There is a need at local, national and international levels for better preparedness against crises, and more attention must be paid to the needs of hungry people once emergencies have passed - the rehabilitation phase should lay a solid foundation for development. Better interaction is also needed between development and relief professionals to ensure investments that reduce household vulnerability to disasters. In all of this, food aid has a major role to play.

---

18 United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (1995); Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) (1995)

19 United Nations (1995c); UNHCR (1995)

20 Stewart (1993)

21 The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (1995)

22 United Nations (1995a)

of food through private traders also contributes to a re-establishment and strengthening of markets. Increasing amounts of food aid are being used to support programmes to demobilize thousands of combatants, to de-mine once productive farmland, to resettle long-term refugees, and, importantly, to rebuild through food-for-work the roads, bridges, and market-places upon which secure agricultural growth and economic recovery will depend. In other words, emergency operations can leave lasting results beyond saving life.

SUSTAINING AND ENHANCING LIVES

3.1 A second major priority for food aid is to support people at times when food needs are critical, so that they can more readily attain their human potential. Solving short-term hunger is pre-requisite for longer-term development solutions. It is necessary to break the cycle of hunger that transcends generations. Vulnerable people must be assisted to be more ready to cope with shocks and able to build on opportunities for advancement.

Hunger constrains human development

3.2 People who benefit from food aid are survivors not failures - they have typically managed to live through droughts, nurture families through the depredations of poverty and hunger, and overcome major traumas of conflict or social disruption. What they deserve is a chance to move on in their lives, to move beyond survival and build a sustainable livelihood. Food aid can help them to achieve this.

3.3 Food aid provided at crucial times of an individual's life is a pre-investment in future health and productivity. People cannot eat retroactively. It is extremely difficult to make up for the damage inflicted by inadequate nutrition in the first five years of life. The nutritional welfare of mothers and infants is vital. If it is inadequate, the damage is both lasting and far broader than the individuals and families involved. Society as a whole suffers losses when children cannot learn, when poor health restricts energy and productivity, when hungry women give birth to a new generation that is malnourished. What is at stake is the productive potential of enormous numbers of affected individuals. To allow these losses is to allow the perpetuation of hunger and poverty.

3.4 Food aid can help to break the cycle of hunger by enabling the poor to gain better access to services and markets that help them take the first important steps out of food insecurity. Hunger is integrally-linked to other conditions which restrict human potential- poor sanitation and hygiene, illiteracy, lack of education facilities, and a lack of access to health care. Targeted food aid not only responds to immediate hunger but also draws vulnerable mothers and children to clinics, encourages and enables poor women to attend literacy and reproductive health training, induces parents to allow their daughters to attend school, supports communities wishing to develop improved water supply and sanitary facilities, or improves the quality and reach of nutrition education. Food aid can also give destitute women the time and resource-buffer that permits them to access productive credit, an approach pioneered by the Grameen Bank. Used in such ways, food aid represents a pre-investment in human potential, a way of letting the poor take advantage of external assistance and frees them from long-run dependency.

The key role of women in food security

3.5 Women are a key part of the solution to hunger.[23] They shoulder a major share of the responsibilities for household food security, and experience has shown that resources in the hands of women often have a greater nutritional benefit to children than the same resources controlled by men.

---

[23] Quisumbing et al. (1995)

bringing food aid to complement markets depends largely on local market performance. The rationale is weak if markets function well and non-food interventions can effectively raise access to food among the hungry. But the case for food aid targeted to the most hungry is strong if there is insufficient food in the market and prices are volatile. Food aid can complement markets and offset their weaknesses in several ways:

Food aid in support of agriculture and income generation

4.5 On the one hand, it can be provided to hungry people through labour-intensive works programmes (including food-for-work). Such activities simultaneously address weaknesses in household productivity and deficiencies in purchasing power. Productivity and purchasing power can both be enhanced by food-aided works programmes which support a transfer of resource management techniques, the stabilization of shifting dunes, the establishment of tree and shrub nurseries, the building of small-scale irrigation infrastructure, or the creation of village-level grain and seed banks. The marketing of food produce can also be improved by the construction of feeder roads and bridges. The long-term impact of such assets complement the short-term gains in hunger-alleviation; both enhance local productivity and lead to a reduction in the need for external assistance. There is little risk of such food aid disrupting markets, or causing dependency or disincentives, since food delivered is additional to normal, typically inadequate, consumption.

Market-friendly food aid

4.6 On the other hand, food aid can help to strengthen existing markets by localized actions in the marketing of food, such as local purchases and monetization. Important quantities of food aid are purchased in developing countries, either for use in a deficit region of the same country or in another country. The share of global food aid purchased in developing countries doubled between 1990 and 1994, rising from 6 to almost 12 percent. In 1994, the World Food Programme alone purchased close to 1 million tons of food commodities in developing countries. Such purchases can give a significant boost to local production, trade, the local transport sector and infrastructure development, as well as reducing costs. Furthermore, food transfers based on local purchase are often more firmly grounded in local dietary preferences than food aid based on long-distance shipments.

4.7 Moreover, some food aid can be fully or partially monetized. Monetization can encourage more efficient market performance by promoting private sector participation in marketing rather than channelling food through parastatal companies [28]. Eritrea is one example of a country where nascent private sector engagement in the marketing of food can benefit from a judicious channelling of monetized food resources through local businesses, when cost efficiency can be assured. In other cases, monetization of food aid could offer some potential for challenging a constraining influence on markets of monopolies or cartels. And monetization during emergencies also deserves careful consideration where scope exists for stabilizing local prices and for protecting markets that can be kept functioning.

4.8 A last area in which there may be scope for stimulating local production and marketing lies in micro-nutrient-enriched or blended foods. While experience with such initiatives is limited so far, preliminary signs are that increased attention to micro-nutrient issues will result in demand for locally processed, fortified, and enriched foods for use in projects that have specific nutrition goals. Products of this nature (blended foods for therapeutic and supplementary feeding) are already produced in countries such as Senegal and Malawi.

---

[28] Riely (1995)

A focus on food-deficit countries

5.7 The **second** trend of the 1990s (linked to the first) is a stronger articulation of a concern - as yet poorly reflected in actual food aid flows - to concentrate food aid on least developed and low-income food deficit countries. The share of global food aid for Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) has fluctuated considerably over time (Table 4). During the 1980s, LIFDCs received between around 90 percent of total food aid. In the 1990s, however, their share has varied between 65 and 88 percent.

5.8 National food insecurity remains a minor determinant of donor food aid allocation decisions. A recent analysis shows that the food security status of recipient countries explains only 7 percent of cross-country variation in per capita food aid transfers.[32] As a result, the countries that receive the largest volumes of food aid are still not necessarily those inhabited by the largest numbers of hungry people.

5.9 Considered from another perspective, food aid accounted for 20 percent or more of the cereal food imports of LIFDCs during the mid-1980s. In 1995/96, a year of high cereal prices, reduced export subsidies and very low stock levels, food aid is expected to account for only 8 percent of the import requirements of such countries. Food aid for the countries who need it most is declining when they need it most.

5.10 Through the Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries, Ministers negotiating the Uruguay Round intended to avoid possible negative effects of such liberalization. Another international body, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, also directed that WFP should concentrate a larger share of its resources on countries in greatest need. More specifically, at least 90 percent of WFP development assistance is to be allocated to low-income food-deficit countries, with at least 50 percent of this to go to least developed countries by 1997.[33]

More targeted interventions

5.11 The **third** major change is that food aid no longer necessarily represents a surplus commodity provided by a small number of countries, and is less used as bilateral programme assistance. It now derives from a more diverse range of donor sources and involves substantial quantities of cash for the procurement of food in developing countries for targeted uses (Table 3). By 1994, as trade liberalization began to take hold and food surpluses in developed countries declined, more than 1.5 million tons of food commodities were procured in developing countries.[34] The Uruguay Round Agreement is likely to contribute to further reductions in structural surpluses of major foodstuffs in traditional donor countries.

5.12 The rising level of food aid procured in response to a specific need is also related to the rise in emergencies. Today's need for rapid responses to large-scale crises, often in situations where normal government channels have been weakened or destroyed, has led many donors to allocate increased responsibility for management of food aid to multilateral institutions and NGOs. In 1994, multilaterals and NGOs together handled 52 percent of global food aid, compared with 28 percent as recently as 1989. The fastest growth has been in the portion delivered through NGOs; the share of food aid handled by these organizations has risen from 10 percent in 1989 to 21 percent in 1994.

---

32 FAO (1994)
33 WFP (1995a)
34 WFP (1995b)

donor allocation decisions. Nutritional improvement goals have more recently entered into methodologies for projecting requirements. For example, even if the record level of almost 15 million tons of food aid in 1992/93 had been fully targeted on needy individuals and those individuals consumed it all, it would have met less than 50 percent of their "nutritional need" assessed at minimum caloric norms.[38] If food aid alone were used to bring the world's hundreds of millions of malnourished people up to a desired nutritional status (measured in terms of a Basal Metabolic Rate of 1.54), 55 million tons would be required for the purpose by the year 2010 - more than six times the level of total food aid available during 1995.

TASKS AHEAD

6.1 Food aid is a keystone of the international community's attempts to uphold fundamental human rights relating to life and food security. Any genuinely human-focused development cannot ignore the problem of hunger. Hungry people are not well-served by, and cannot effectively compete in, markets even if they are functioning well. Their capacity to participate in economic growth and development is still further constrained when limited resource endowments are compounded by market weaknesses. Food aid can compensate for inadequacies in both endowments and markets by giving people the chance to sustain themselves and enhance their capabilities to participate in the marketplace.

6.2 The guiding principle of food aid must be to reach people who need it most, primarily in food-deficit countries, at times when they need it most, and in ways that achieve lasting impact as well as short term help. Thus, the first claim on scarce food aid resources has to be targeted actions that address one or other of the major dimensions of current hunger. There are therefore three main ways in which food aid, as an increasingly valuable and scarce resource, will need to be refined and strengthened in the coming years.

Saving life, rebuilding livelihoods

6.3 The first goal is to provide timely, appropriate and adequate relief interventions. The main victims of emergencies, women and children, must be brought as partners into the dynamics of relief design and implementation. Women must be the principal managers of food aid resources, and they should be able to move on with their lives after a crisis with new skills in hand. Even emergency interventions have long term as well immediate aspects; where possible they should be treated as opportunities for investing in the future.

6.4 Complex emergencies require political action as well as humanitarian responses. They must be addressed not only by food aid but by diplomacy and debate that allows for a resolution of the causes of deep-seated resentment fuelling conflict. And emergency interventions must lead progressively, and as early as possible, into post-crisis rehabilitation. Relief and rehabilitation initiatives must ensure that the resilience of households and rural economies are strengthened and that development investments can subsequently take hold.

Attacking hunger from birth

6.5 Secondly, the focus must always be on people. It will be especially important to alleviate the hunger of women and children at critical times in their lives. Their well-being during these times of particular need has a bearing not only on their own future, but also on their ability to contribute to development in general. Food deficiencies early in life will lead to health problems, loss of mental

[38] Ezekiel (1989); Missiaen et al. (1995)

6.11 The second part of the answer lies with a greater mutual support between food and non-food resources. Food aid alone will not be able to adequately address the scale of hunger that will face us in coming decades. Efforts aimed at raising agricultural productivity and output as well as purchasing power among hungry people and food-deficit countries must be stepped up. Yet, neither will increased food production or complementary financial transfers be sufficient to tackle the problems of food security, particularly among the millions facing hunger in more remote regions. While food deficits related to 'permanent' emergencies, weak markets, inappropriate economic policies and armed conflict continue to cripple growth in many countries there will be a crucial role to be played by targeted food aid.

6.12 Closer partnerships are needed between food and non-food resources to ensure that hunger is treated as a mainstream development problem. Recent efforts to improve the integration of food aid into recipient country food security and nutrition strategies and safety-net programmes have to be broadened and strengthened. The planning of food assistance on the basis of country-specific strategies, and its integration into other assistance, is a first step toward more effective partnerships. Beyond that, government, donor and NGO partners all need to be present and effective in regions, and among households, worst-affected by hunger if we are to maximize the impact of food aid and other investments on hungry people.

Table 2: Food aid shipments (cereals) by category, 1975/76-1994/95

Year	World (mn tons)	Programme %	Project %	Emergency %
1975/76*	6.8	71	19	10
1976/77	9.0	77	17	6
1977/78	9.2	71	19	10
1978/79**	9.5	72	18	10
1979/80	8.9	70	20	10
1980/81	8.9	60	26	14
1981/82	9.1	52	27	21
1982/83	9.2	62	26	12
1983/84	9.8	57	28	15
1984/85	12.5	53	21	25
1985/86	10.9	46	24	30
1986/87	12.6	55	29	17
1987/88	13.5	54	27	19
1988/89***	10.2	54	25	21
1989/90	11.3	58	21	20
1990/91	12.4	56	21	23
1991/92	13.1	52	19	29
1992/93	15.2	57	15	28
1993/94	12.6	53	18	29
1994/95*	8.4	40	25	35

*/ WFP/CFA, Review of Food Policies and Programmes, 1978/82
**/ WFP, Food Aid: Flows–Directions–Uses, 1987/88/89
***/ WFP INTERFAIS, Food Aid Flows, 1995

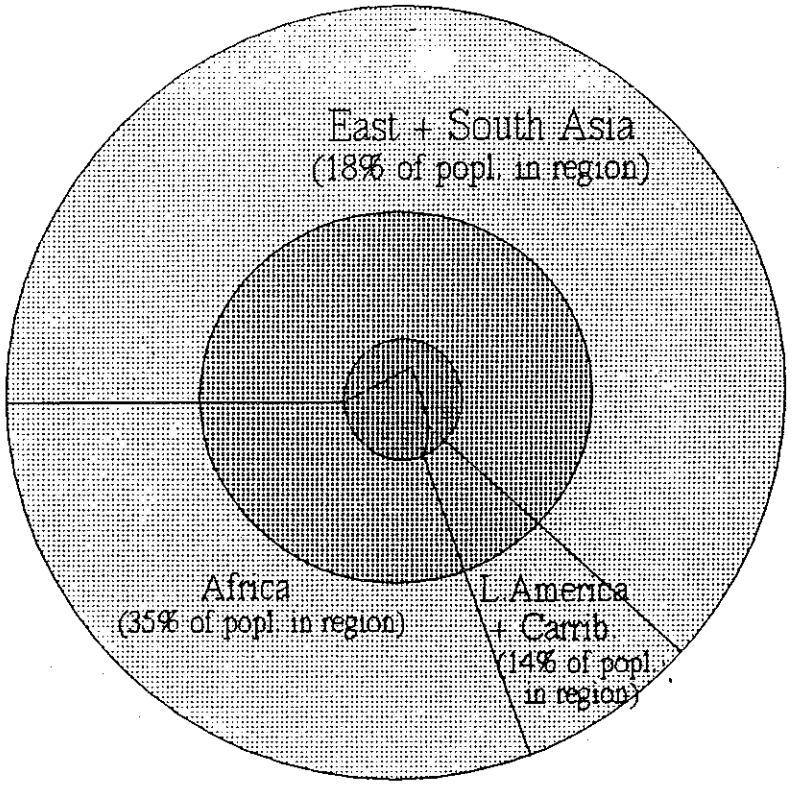
Table 4: Share of global food aid reaching low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs), 1971/72-1995/96

Year	Food Aid to LIFD Countries (mn tons)	Share of Global Food Aid %	Share of LIFD Food Imports %
1971/72	7.0	56	39
1972/73	6.0	60	24
1973/74	4.0	69	13
1974/75	6.7	80	21
1975/76	5.3	78	20
1976/77	7.1	79	27
1977/78	7.1	77	23
1978/79	7.7	81	19
1979/80	7.6	85	18
1980/81	7.3	82	15
1981/82	7.7	85	15
1982/83	8.2	89	15
1983/84	9.3	95	18
1984/85	11.5	92	23
1985/86	10.2	94	22
1986/87	11.4	90	24
1987/88	12.0	89	21
1988/89	8.7	85	15
1989/90	8.2	73	14
1990/91	9.7	78	18
1991/92	11.0	84	15
1992/93	11.1	73	16
1993/94	8.2	65	12
1994/95*	7.4	88	10
1995/96**	6.0	79	8

*/ Estimate
**/ Forecast

Source: FAO Agrostat and FAO Food Outlook, Aug./Sept. 1995

Figure 1: Types, regions and dimensions of hunger



Acute hunger (30-50 million victims of disaster) *

Chronically undernourished mothers and children in critical times of their lives: 200-250 million

Chronically undernourished people: 700-1000 million

*/ Not included are some 20 million refugees and displaced people in countries without chronic hunger

Source: FAO 1995, Rosegrant et.al. 1995; ACC/SCN 1995, Report of UN SG 1995

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ACC/SCN (Administrative Committee on Coordination/Sub-committee on Nutrition), (1993), *Second Report on the World Nutrition Situation*, Volume I, Geneva: ACC/SCN

Ahmed, A. (1994), *Food Consumption and Nutritional Effects of Targeted Food Interventions in Bangladesh*, Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Von Braun, J., T. Teklu and P. Webb, (1991), *Labor-intensive Public Works for Food Security: Experience in Africa*, Working Papers on Food Subsidies No. 6. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Broca, S. and P. Oram (1991). *Study on the location of the poor*, International Food Policy Research Institute, Mimeo.

Clay, E. J. and H. W. Singer (1985), *Food aid and development: Issues and evidence*, A survey of the literature since 1977 on the role and impact of food aid in developing countries. Occasional Paper No. 3. Rome: World Food Programme.

Ezekiel, H (1989), *Medium-Term estimates of Demand-Based Food Aid Requirements and their Variability*. Reprint No. 177. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (1995a). *Elements for Policy Inclusion in a Draft Policy Document and Plan of Action on Universal Food Security*. Document CL 108/12 for the 108th Session of the Council. Rome.

_____, (1995b), *Food, Agriculture and Food Security: The Global Dimension. Historical development, present situation, future prospects*. Document WFS 96/TECH/1 prepared for the World Food Summit. Rome: FAO.

_____ (1995c), *Impact of the Uruguay Round on Agriculture*, Report to the Committee on Commodity Problems, Sixtieth Session, Rome, 3-7 April 1995 (Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda). Rome: FAO.

_____ (1994), *Assessment of the Current World Food Security Situation and Recent Policy Developments*, Document CFS:94/2. Rome: FAO.

Haddad, L., Bhattarai, M. Immink and S. Kumar (1995), *Household Food Security and Diarrhoea as Determinants of Nutrition: New Trade-offs and New Opportunities Towards 2020*, Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Hansch, S (1995), *An Explosion of Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, In Countries in Crisis: Hunger 1996. Sixth Annual Report on the State of World Hunger. Washington, D.C.: Bread for the World Institute, pp. 1-7.

Hoet, J. J. (1995), *Role of Foetal and Infant Growth and Nutrition in Causality of CVD and Diabetes in Later Life*. WHO Collaborating Centre. Louvain University, Belgium.

IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (1995), World Disasters Report 1995, Geneva, Switzerland: IFRC.

Missiaen, M., S. Shapouri and R. Trostle (1995), *Food Aid Needs and Availabilities: Projections for 2005*, ERS Staff Paper No. AGES 9523. Economic Research Service, Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture.

Mosley, W. H. and P. Cowley (1991), *The Challenge of World Health*, Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.

ODI (Overseas Development Institute) (1995), *Developing Countries in the WTO*. ODI Briefing Paper. No.3 (1995). London: ODI.

Pena, C., P. Webb and L. Haddad (1994), *Women's Economic Advancement Through Agricultural Change: A Review of Donor Experience*. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, Mimeo.

Pelletier, D. (1994), *The relationship between child anthropometry and mortality in developing countries*. The Journal of Nutrition. 124 (10) Supplement.

Pollitt, E., K. Gorman, P. L. Engle, J. A. Rivera and R. Martorell (1995), *Nutrition in early life and the fulfillment of intellectual potential*. The Journal of Nutrition. 125 (4) Supplement: 1068S-77S.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. Food security is about people. Hunger on a global scale reminds us of the unfinished task of achieving sustainable food security for everyone, everywhere. Adequacy of food at a national level does not rule out hunger. The important goal of raising agricultural productivity is only one part of the solution. The attainment of food security involves eliminating current hunger facing hundreds of millions of people today, and reducing the risks of future hunger.

ii. This paper argues that hunger is unacceptable in a world of plenty. Every effort must be taken to address both the symptoms and causes of hunger among the 800 million people who are undernourished today. The precise number of today's hungry people who can best be helped through targeted food aid remains to be determined. Nevertheless, this paper identifies three main categories of hunger in which food aid can play a principal role in helping households attain food security.

iii. The first category comprises people facing acute hunger - victims of conflict and natural disasters. To people such as these, survival supersedes thoughts of long-term development; there is no longer-term solution without first a short-term solution. Action against acute hunger is therefore the first priority in addressing food insecurity; hungry people cannot wait for longer-term gains in productivity to resolve their problems.

iv. Secondly, there are people with critical needs at special times of the life cycle, including the new-born, infants, and child-bearing/lactating women. Those yet to be born suffer a lack of nutrients if their mothers are themselves malnourished since the "programming" of chronic diseases among adults starts with malnutrition among women during pregnancy. If constraints at birth are compounded by a continued lack of food, the danger of mortality is great. Children who survive severe malnutrition early in their lives are likely to become disadvantaged adults prone to remain poor, food insecure, and the probable victims of future emergencies. Actions taken to address the current hunger of mothers and young children therefore have a significant outcome on food security in the longer-run.

v. The third group, which partly overlaps with the first two, includes people with low and variable incomes, limited assets, few marketable skills, deficient purchasing power, and a lack of powerful advocates - the chronically undernourished. Hunger among such people is not just a manifestation of poverty, it is also a cause of their poverty. Removing current hunger is thus the first threshold to be crossed in eradicating poverty and establishing food security.

vi. All three forms of hunger are universal. Recent tragedies in Eastern Europe and the Republics of the former USSR show that no part of the globe is immune to hunger if conditions lend themselves to massive failures in access to food and health. However, the above three categories of hunger tend to be concentrated in remoter parts of the developing world that are served by poorly-functioning markets and have low agricultural productivity, high fertility rates, and a risk of natural disaster. These are the very regions in which limited economic returns tend to discourage capital investments, and which governments and donors find the most difficult to reach. The structural problems of such regions are increasingly compounded by humanitarian emergencies associated with armed conflict.

vii. Currently, most hungry people are found in Low-Income Food-Deficit countries, particularly in southern and eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The latter region poses particular cause for concern, since over 40 percent of its population is chronically undernourished and it has recently faced an upsurge in emergencies. As armed conflict has taken over from drought as a primary cause

of famine, Africa has come to account for most of the world's refugees and internally displaced people. It is often the same people who face the chronic and/or life-cycle risks that are first and most at risk when battle is engaged.

viii. Food aid is an essential resource for saving and sustaining life in emergencies, as well as for addressing the other forms of hunger. However, today's food aid is different from that of the past:

- From being largely a bilateral resource used by governments to support broad political and economic objectives, food aid has increasingly become a resource used through multilateral and NGO channels for development goals and humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and preparedness.

- The share of global food aid used for targeted assistance in both relief and development has risen from less than 30 percent in the early 1970s to close to 50 percent in the early 1990s.

- Food aid is no longer mainly a means of disposing of industrialized countries' surpluses; it is increasingly provided, a) through cash purchases of food in developing countries, and b) from tight aid budgets in which food aid must compete with other forms of development assistance.

- There has been a decline recently in the supply of food aid - a drop from over 15 million tons of cereals in 1992/93 to around 8 million tons in 1994/95. This has been paralleled by a fall in the amount of food aid received by Low-Income Food-Deficit countries - from over 11 million tons to around 6 million tons. Non-cereal food aid has represented a steady 12 percent of total food aid over this period. The decline in food aid supply is most damaging to the hungry in food-deficit countries since it is they who most need, and benefit from, targeted food assistance.

ix. Given that food aid is becoming an increasingly scarce resource, its uses and targeting will need to be refined in coming years. The guiding principles of food aid must be that of reaching the people who need it most, primarily in food-deficit countries, at times when they need it most, and in ways that achieve lasting impact as well as short term help. Thus, the first claim on scarce food aid resources should be targeted actions that address the major dimensions of current hunger.

x. First, food aid must be available to save lives. A direct transfer of food is often essential to ensure survival - the most fundamental of human rights. Yet, saving life with food is not an end in itself. Since food security is about sustaining people, relief actions are not just momentary palliatives against starvation. For millions of people, relief is the essential first step toward sustainable food security. But this first step must be followed by actions aimed at post-crisis rehabilitation of affected households and at sustainable livelihoods. Greater attention needs to be paid to the establishment of improved preparedness mechanisms against future disasters and appropriate investments aimed at reducing vulnerability to crises.

xi. Second, food aid must be focused on key areas of human development, particularly on addressing debilitating hunger among women and children at critical times of their lives. Individuals have special needs at certain periods of their life; most notably babies in the womb, children under the age of five, and child-bearing or lactating women. If not met, early problems of food insufficiency lead to damaged health, nutritional status, mental vigour and labour productivity. Often such damage can never be repaired. Since there is no such thing as 'retroactive' feeding, nutritional losses of today cannot easily be made up for tomorrow. Food insufficiencies must be tackled head on, complemented by efforts in areas such as nutrition, health, education, skills training, reproductive health, asset creation and income-generation. Breaking the negative cycle of inter-generational hunger by investing in people, not just in their lands or their crops, has benefits that last across generations.

xii. What is more, food aid often reaches women and children more effectively than other kinds of assistance and supports an immediate improvement in their productivity. Feeding children through schools in the poorest regions of food-deficit countries has a pay-off in addressing current hunger as well as promoting longer-term human growth and productivity. Similarly, transferring food aid directly to women places a valuable, empowering resource in the hands of the person in the household most responsible for domestic food security. Women are more likely than men to use any additional income for ensuring a better diet for their family. The potential for food aid to bring assistance directly to needy women is great. Food aid often reaches hungry women where other resources do not. Food provided as wages or incentives often reaches women in food insecure households that may be 'crowded out' of projects offering cash resources.

xiii. Third, food aid must support actions against chronic hunger in regions where food insecure households are by-passed by mainstream development initiatives and where markets are weak. Hundreds of millions of people suffering chronic under-nutrition need assistance to overcome their current hunger, but in ways that allow them to become active participants in development. Deficiencies in household purchasing power and productivity can be addressed simultaneously through labour-intensive works programmes that transfer an income to food insecure households while building infrastructure or enhancing soil and water management. Thus, food aid is the ally not only of the hungry people of the world, but also of the productive activities and markets on which the hungry ultimately depend.

xiv. Targeted food aid is the essential resource for addressing the hunger of many millions of hungry people in food-deficit countries. But, for targeted food aid to adequately address much of today's hunger, the level of assistance reaching the hungry needs to be enhanced and protected from fluctuations in global supply, particularly in years of high world food prices.

CONTENTS

FOOD SECURITY: SUSTAINING PEOPLE

Introduction

1.1 Food security is about people. It is about the access required by all people at all times to safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. It is about a life free of the risks of malnutrition or starvation. In this sense attention is needed both to long-term goals of raising agricultural productivity and world food supplies, and to the short-term problem of hundreds of millions of individuals who go hungry today. Hunger is not just a manifestation of poverty, it perpetuates poverty. The attainment of food security therefore involves eliminating current hunger and reducing the risks of future hunger, not just ensuring the supply of food at a global level.

1.2 This paper elaborates priorities for food aid in a world of persistent hunger and increasingly complex humanitarian emergencies. Targeted food aid is the most important resource for addressing the urgent needs of many millions of hungry people in food-deficit countries. That said, food aid is not the answer to all hunger in the world. Some conditions of hunger are more appropriately tackled through interventions based on the targeted delivery of cash or other resources.

1.3 The exact number of hungry people who are best served through targeted food aid remains to be determined with precision. Nevertheless, this paper does identify three categories of hunger as priority areas in which targeted food aid should play a principal role in coming years in helping households to attain food security. This new thinking is an elaboration of recent discussions within the governing body of the World Food Programme (WFP)[1].

Times of plenty do not rule out hunger

1.4 Hunger is indefensible in a world full of food. At a time when sufficient food is produced at a global level to meet the needs of every individual alive, an estimated 800 million people suffer chronic undernutrition, and as many as 2 billion more people lack essential micro-nutrients[2]. The reality is that adequacy of food at a global, national or even regional level does not rule out serious hunger at the local level. With almost 100 million new people likely to be added to the world's population each year during the coming three decades, there is an urgent need to ensure that today's hunger is addressed today - not left for tomorrow when its severity and impact may be compounded.

1.5 Hunger has chronic, seasonal and short-term (acute) dimensions. Chronic hunger is a consequence of diets persistently inadequate in terms of quantity and/or quality, resulting from household poverty. Seasonal hunger is related to cycles of food-growing and harvesting. Acute hunger, by contrast, arises from absolute shortages of food, often due to climatic fluctuations or other natural disasters; or to inaccessibility of food because of armed conflict, or to a massive collapse in purchasing power associated with disruptions in labour or food markets.

1.6 While the dimensions, causes, and consequences of hunger differ widely even within the same country, all least-developed, food-deficit countries, and many middle-income countries contain hungry people. These people do not have uniform characteristics. Just as some regions of a country are devastated by drought while others are not, some people suffer extremes of hunger and others do not, even in the same household[3]. Three main categories of hunger are identified below.

---

1 WFP (1995a).

2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 1995a.

3 Webb and von Braun (1994)

Humanitarian crises and acute hunger

1.7 The first group comprises people who face the threat of starvation, and perhaps the violence of physical assault. These are the victims of humanitarian crises. Where the cause of acute hunger is a natural disaster, such as a drought or locusts, actions need to be swift to assist people in their home areas in order protect their livelihoods. Without a swift response, loss of life and productive assets, through farm and livestock sales and seed consumption for survival, can result in a long-term erosion of development potential for whole regions. For example, the international response to exceptional drought in southern Africa in 1991/92 was successful in preventing widespread famine and mortality. Yet, the scale of the drought was such that countless households lost many of their productive assets and were forced to use their reserves of income in order to survive the crisis.

1.8 Problems of hunger are compounded by displacement associated with conflict, the immediate cause of most crises since the early 1990s. The hungry are often forced from their homes by civil or international strife. In these so-called "complex emergencies" innocent people are often uprooted from their homes; they lose most of their possessions and face months, perhaps years, of misery; and they may face death. To these people, survival supersedes thoughts of long-term development.

Hunger within the household

1.9 Secondly, there are poor people who are more vulnerable than others at critical times of the life cycle, including babies in the womb, the new-born, young child-bearing/lactating women. Those yet to be born suffer a deficiency of nutrients if their mothers are themselves malnourished since the "programming" of chronic diseases among adults starts with malnutrition among women during pregnancy.[4] The dangers of premature birth, low birth-weight at normal partum, and growth retardation due to nutrient deficiencies or health problems represent major constraints to normal childhood development.

1.10 If the constraints at birth are compounded by a continued lack of food, the danger of infant and child mortality, or at least sub-optimal growth, is huge. Food-deprived children will be smaller and more likely to die young - it is difficult to make up for damage inflicted in the first five years[5]. The increased incidence of disease has a greater negative impact on child nutrition among households that are already calorie-deficient than among food secure households.[6] Conversely, if malnutrition were totally eradicated from the globe the risk of mortality among infants exposed to infectious disease would be lowered by more than 50 percent[7]. The associations among food, nutrition and health are crucial. Unless actions are taken today to remove the threat of hunger there are likely to be around 200 million chronically underweight children under the age of five in the year 2020.[8]

1.11 But, even if children survive severe malnutrition early on, they are likely to become disadvantaged adults, possible victims of future emergencies. They will be less productive and thus be faced with the chronic burden of poverty. Mothers will face harder pregnancies and give birth to nutritionally-compromised children, and both men and women will face health and productivity constraints. In sum, hunger begets hunger.

1.12 Given its inter-generational reach, the longer hunger persists the harder it becomes to resolve. Actions to address the current hunger of mothers and infants have significant benefits for long-term food security. Investing in people, not just in their productive assets (such as land, tools, and crops), represents a 'pre-investment' in food security.

---

4 Hoet (1995).
5 Pollitt et al. (1995)
6 Haddad et al. (1995)
7 Pelletier (1994)
8 FAO (1995b); Rosegrant et al. (1995)

The chronically poor and hungry

1.13 Thirdly, there are households with low and variable incomes, limited assets, few marketable skills, and few powerful advocates to act on their behalf - the chronically poor. These include many smallholder farmers, landless and/or daily labourers, livestock herders, and the unskilled unemployed. Numbering hundreds of millions, these people earn less than US$ 1 a day, of which roughly 70 percent tends to be spent on food consumption, and they subsist in a state of poverty that never rules out hunger.[9]

1.14 Persistent hunger, largely found in low-income food-deficit countries, is a stumbling block to efforts aimed at eliminating poverty, and is thereby self-perpetuating. Chronic hunger is part of a vicious cycle of low productivity and earnings, ill-health, indebtedness and malnutrition. Past investments made by vulnerable households are eroded by chronic hunger, and future incomes are also compromised. Hungry children cannot derive full benefits from their education, even if they manage to gain access to formal education. Poor women cannot invest sufficiently in their own, or their children's future, since they are fully preoccupied by the multiple problems associated with current hunger.

1.15 Overlapping with the group that faces persistent calorie shortages is an even larger number of people who suffer micronutrient deficiencies due largely to dietary inadequacies. Roughly two billion people are currently at risk of iodine deficiencies which can cause considerable brain damage and cretinism as well as goitre. Almost 500 million women are thought to suffer from iron deficiency anaemia, leading to poor health and low birth-weights. Over 200 million children experience inadequate consumption of vitamin A.[10] The latter is a deficiency responsible for mental and physical impairment among children, blindness and increased risk of death from common diseases.

1.16 Addressing such micronutrient deficiencies is a relatively inexpensive and cost effective exercise, particularly when compared to the scale of emergency interventions needed to respond to widespread nutritional failure. Ignoring mild symptoms of malnutrition today can lead to acute symptoms tomorrow.

The geography of hunger

1.17 Nowhere is immune to hunger if conditions lend themselves to massive failures in nutrition and health. Recent tragedies in Eastern Europe and the Republics of the former USSR have underlined this fact. That said, hunger affects certain people in certain places more than others. For example, acute hunger that can lead to famine tends not to be found in cities (unless they are placed under seige or devastated by conflict), or in regions of high agricultural output. Widespread, acute hunger has not been prevalent in temperate climates in the absence of war or discriminatory policies for 150 years. It tends not to be found where transaction costs for food marketing are low.

1.18 By contrast, the kinds of hunger that need to be addressed by targeted food aid are widely found in regions where economic returns to agriculture tend to be low, and in which there are high transactions costs due to deficient infrastructure and inefficient markets. This combination of risks is characteristic of the poorest countries of the world, particularly low-income, food-deficit countries located in the semi-arid, warm sub-humid and cool tropics.[11] Additional nutrition problems are to be found among impoverished households in urban slums worldwide. The latter are often attributable to insanitary living conditions and certain micronutrient deficiencies that may not be best tackled through food assistance.

---

9 WFP (1995a); FAO (1995b)

10 WHO (1992); UNICEF (1995)

11 Sharma et al. (1995); Rosegrant et al. (1995)

1.19 Currently, the largest number of people facing food deficiencies are in Asia (Figure 1). The number of people not eating a minimum diet in southern and eastern Asia is estimated to be over 500 million, equivalent to 18 percent of the population of the region.[12]

1.20 In South Asia, more than two-thirds of the hungry are to be found in the driest agro-ecological zones of the warm tropics.[13] Their diet is dominated by coarse grains such as millet and sorghum (with other cereals and cassava acting as important complements). While rice and wheat were the star performers of the Green Revolution, the driest areas of the sub-region benefited relatively less from such technologies than did the moister tropics and sub-tropics.

1.21 Hunger and poverty increased in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean during the structural adjustment reforms of the 1980s. The number of chronically undernourished is estimated to have grown from 46 million in 1980 to over 60 million in the early 1990s; this amounts to 14 percent of the population.[14] Considerable improvements are anticipated in malnutrition rates in these two regions in the coming decades, as they are relatively less poor than sub-Saharan Africa and generally enjoy better market and institutional infrastructures.

1.22 Sub-Saharan Africa shows the most cause for concern, characterized as it is by a decline in domestic per capita production, high fertility rates, natural disasters and the growing problem of emergencies displacing huge numbers of people. Over 200 million (more than 40 percent) of the continent's population is chronically malnourished.[15] Roughly 50 percent of Africa's poor inhabit semi-arid regions and therefore depend on low and variable rainfall for food production.[16] As a result, local diets are dominated by low-yielding coarse grains (traditional maize, millet and sorghum) and roots and tubers that have so far shown limited potential for productivity increases.

THE FIRST GOAL OF FOOD AID: SAVING LIFE

2.1 The right to life is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Saving people whose ability to gain access to food has been curtailed is the first principle of humanitarian intervention. People have to survive before they can benefit from, and contribute to, sustainable development.

2.2 Food is a fundamental resource for saving life. There are some emergency situations in which the provision of cash rather than food aid, or the monetization of food commodities to stabilize prices is warranted. This could be the case, for example, where localized crop failure leads to extreme hunger in the presence of marketable food in neighbouring regions (as in parts of Ethiopia during the 1980s). Yet, the number of emergencies in which this applies are relatively few, and in most cases hungry women and children, who make up 70 percent of the innocent victims of armed conflict, need direct food assistance.

2.3 The number of "complex emergencies" has grown sharply in recent years. In the mid-1990s, there were at least 50 serious armed conflicts ongoing in the world, with an increasing concentration of frequency and destructiveness in poorer developing countries.[17] These crises are "complex" not so much in their manifestation of human suffering (which may differ little from suffering during other emergencies), but in their scale (often regional rather than national), and the complexity of their causes and potential resolution, which often have political and military dimensions.

---

[12] Administrative Committee on Coordination/Sub-committee on Nutrition (ACC/SCN) 1993; FAO (1995b)

[13] Broca and Oram (1991)

[14] FAO (1995b)

[15] FAO (1995b)

[16] Broca and Oram (1991)

[17] Sivard (1994); Hansch (1995)

2.4 The rise in "complex emergencies" has meant that acute hunger is increasingly found in the presence of political instability which compounds inadequate past investments, infrastructure deficiencies, rapid population growth and environmental limitations to increased productivity. All of this makes the task of tackling hunger more difficult. The compounding of constraints to the attainment of food security is all-too apparent in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.5 As conflict has taken over from drought as the primary cause of famine and human displacement, the numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons and non-displaced but asset-stripped households has grown sharply, particularly in Africa. The total number of refugees has doubled approximately every six years since the mid-1970s. By 1994, the number had reached approximately 25 million, of whom roughly one third were found in Africa.[18] In addition, the number of Internally Displaced Persons reached an estimated 25-30 million in 1995, as many as 60 percent of them in Africa.[19] The global total of people up-rooted by conflict or political disturbance has reached roughly 50 million - an average of one million people for every conflict.

2.6 What is more, the impact of hunger due to conflict and population displacement is not limited to the individuals involved. Host communities, typically as poor as the poor coming to them for help, are drawn into the dislocation. The hosts are affected as commodity prices rise, labour markets are affected, local or national development activities are curtailed, and widespread natural resource damage results from new concentrations of displaced people needing land and fuel to survive. The recent growth in numbers of refugees and displaced people shows no signs of abating, and is the least responsive to progress made in the realms of food production or distribution. The solution to large-scale population displacements is typically political rather than simply economic or environmental.

The damage wrought by crises

2.7 The human, productivity, and opportunity costs of complex emergencies are too high, however measured. Households disrupted by armed conflict are vulnerable to hunger over long periods of time. Nations experiencing conflict see past gains in development eroded or destroyed.[20] Destruction in countries such as Mozambique, Cambodia or Nicaragua only adds to the cost of development investments in the future.

2.8 What is more, the resources dedicated to humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping and rehabilitation are increasing. Financial disbursements for interventions from OECD countries (excluding food aid) expanded from US$ 809 million in 1989 to US$ 3.2 billion in 1993.[21] The United Nations system allocated more than US$ 5 billion on peace-keeping operations between 1991 and 1995 - just in Africa.[22]

2.9 Growing more food is essential, but will not in itself solve the problem of hunger. There is a need at local, national and international levels for better preparedness against crises, and more attention must be paid to the needs of hungry people once emergencies have passed - the rehabilitation phase should lay a solid foundation for development. Better interaction is also needed between development and relief professionals to ensure investments that reduce household vulnerability to disasters. In all of this, food aid has a major role to play.

---

[18] United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (1995); Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) (1995)

[19] United Nations (1995c); UNHCR (1995)

[20] Stewart (1993)

[21] The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (1995)

[22] United Nations (1995a)

Food aid in emergencies

2.10 The share of food aid dedicated to saving lives in emergencies (both natural and man-made), has risen from 10 percent during the late 1970s to roughly 30 percent in the mid-1990s (Table 2). This represented an increase from less than 1 million tons per annum in the 1970s to between 3 and 4 million tons in 1994/95, with the sharpest rise apparent in the years since 1989/90. The proportion channelled to sub-Saharan Africa has grown from an average of 12 percent during the 1970s to 36 percent in 1994/95 (Table 1).

2.11 Food aid for emergencies is provided in a number of ways: (1) as a food reserve to be released onto the market when local food prices rise beyond a planned threshold; (2) as a ration provided to targeted households or communities to maintain at least minimum calorie consumption during a crisis; (3) as a meal provided directly to most needy individuals, generally children, through a supplementary or rehabilitation feeding programme; or (4) as a wage paid to participants in food-for-work projects that are initiated to provide an employment-based safety-net during times of food shortfall.

2.12 Each of these mechanisms has its niche according to prevailing conditions (prices, policies, degree of hunger, and institutional support). They are successful if they manage to sustain life, and more successful if they do so in a cost-effective manner. The shift from development towards relief carries cost implications, however. Since many emergencies occur in geographically-remote regions of the world, the logistical hurdles in the way of rapid delivery of food aid are huge. Consequently, more cash is needed to deliver relief food than other forms of food aid. For example, it costs an average of around $2.20 to deliver $1.00 worth of food aid in an emergency, compared with 30 to 100 cents required to deliver the same amount of food to a development project.

2.13 Whatever the cost, food aid is never wasted if it saves lives. But it is unfortunate that more cannot be used to enhance those lives. It would be preferable to use food aid for purposes other than saving people from starvation. A bag of cereal used to keep a child alive in a refugee camp is a bag that could have been used to support a clinic or school-lunch programme, both aimed at long-term human development.

Rehabilitation and crisis prevention

2.14 Food aid plays a role beyond human survival; it is also a resource for investment in long-term development. Emergency operations must be designed to facilitate a smooth and prompt transition of operations from relief towards development. Attainment of a stable livelihood after a crisis demands more than long-term feeding of the concerned vulnerable groups.

2.15 The human damage caused by severe hunger is only a part of the overall problem. A depletion of resources caused by large-scale hunger, or the creation of refugee camps, carries the implications of food insecurity far beyond the realm of a discrete event. Once a disaster has passed, even a natural disaster, the process of household and nation-rebuilding can be severely impeded by the loss of people, community integration, livestock, savings and even the government's capacity to tax and invest. Thus, once conditions have stabilized and minimal food consumption has been established among affected people, food aid must be used in varied ways to help enhance the human skills and economic assets of a food-assisted population through nutrition and other training programmes, as well as through community, infrastructure and agricultural development activities.

2.16 The first task is to prevent people whose lives have been saved from slipping back into hunger again. This may involve supplementary feeding for still-vulnerable groups combined with a carefully-phased reduction in the scale and size of more general distribution activities. The second task is to help regain or rebuild the asset base and productive capacities of people and the local economy. Roads and markets, schools and clinics often need to be rebuilt in war-torn countries such as Mozambique, Cambodia and Ethiopia. The use of local private sector capabilities for the transport

of food through private traders also contributes to a re-establishment and strengthening of markets. Increasing amounts of food aid are being used to support programmes to demobilize thousands of combatants, to de-mine once productive farmland, to resettle long-term refugees, and, importantly, to rebuild through food-for-work the roads, bridges, and market-places upon which secure agricultural growth and economic recovery will depend. In other words, emergency operations can leave lasting results beyond saving life.

SUSTAINING AND ENHANCING LIVES

3.1 A second major priority for food aid is to support people at times when food needs are critical, so that they can more readily attain their human potential. Solving short-term hunger is pre-requisite for longer-term development solutions. It is necessary to break the cycle of hunger that transcends generations. Vulnerable people must be assisted to be more ready to cope with shocks and able to build on opportunities for advancement.

Hunger constrains human development

3.2 People who benefit from food aid are survivors not failures - they have typically managed to live through droughts, nurture families through the depredations of poverty and hunger, and overcome major traumas of conflict or social disruption. What they deserve is a chance to move on in their lives, to move beyond survival and build a sustainable livelihood. Food aid can help them to achieve this.

3.3 Food aid provided at crucial times of an individual's life is a pre-investment in future health and productivity. People cannot eat retroactively. It is extremely difficult to make up for the damage inflicted by inadequate nutrition in the first five years of life. The nutritional welfare of mothers and infants is vital. If it is inadequate, the damage is both lasting and far broader than the individuals and families involved. Society as a whole suffers losses when children cannot learn, when poor health restricts energy and productivity, when hungry women give birth to a new generation that is malnourished. What is at stake is the productive potential of enormous numbers of affected individuals. To allow these losses is to allow the perpetuation of hunger and poverty.

3.4 Food aid can help to break the cycle of hunger by enabling the poor to gain better access to services and markets that help them take the first important steps out of food insecurity. Hunger is integrally-linked to other conditions which restrict human potential- poor sanitation and hygiene, illiteracy, lack of education facilities, and a lack of access to health care. Targeted food aid not only responds to immediate hunger but also draws vulnerable mothers and children to clinics, encourages and enables poor women to attend literacy and reproductive health training, induces parents to allow their daughters to attend school, supports communities wishing to develop improved water supply and sanitary facilities, or improves the quality and reach of nutrition education. Food aid can also give destitute women the time and resource-buffer that permits them to access productive credit, an approach pioneered by the Grameen Bank. Used in such ways, food aid represents a pre-investment in human potential, a way of letting the poor take advantage of external assistance and frees them from long-run dependency.

The key role of women in food security

3.5 Women are a key part of the solution to hunger.[23] They shoulder a major share of the responsibilities for household food security, and experience has shown that resources in the hands of women often have a greater nutritional benefit to children than the same resources controlled by men.

---

[23] Quisumbing et al. (1995)

They are more likely than men to spend a given income on food for the family.[24] Thus, resources for women represent resources for food security. Successful development for women does not stop at the individual - it benefits whole households and communities. Reducing gender disparities by enhancing the human and physical resources commanded by women leads to growth in household agricultural productivity, greater income and better food and nutrition security for all.[25]

3.6 What is more, educating mothers is especially important in reducing child mortality.[26] Educated women are more likely to have the status and power in a household to ensure prenatal care, delivery care, childhood immunizations, better diets for children and even better housing. Educated mothers are also more likely to be an effective agent of social change, encouraging their own girls to attend school and playing a crucial role in community development as a whole.

3.7 Food aid, as one of several resources supporting change among hungry households, often reaches hungry women better than the capital flows that make-up close to 95 percent of total development assistance. Food aid provided as wages or as incentives to participate in income earning or training can reach women in food insecure households which are often 'crowded out' of projects offering cash. Likewise, lower status food offered in full or part remuneration for project activities attracts the most needy members of a community. Experience shows that wealthier households tend to participate less in food-for-work, and food wages typically result in a larger share of the wage being consumed *as food* than when cash is offered.[27] Moreover, food wages are inflation-proof when markets are unstable or shortages bring major price increases. In short, the self-targeting potential of food aid makes it well suited to expanded use as a kind of 'resource window' for women and others among the very poor.

CHRONIC HUNGER AND WEAK MARKETS

4.1 The chronically hungry are typically by-passed by mainstream development initiatives and unable to benefit fully from the market. To attain sustainable food security they require better access to productive resources, credit, social services, market outlets, and decision-making authority. But, before they can reach that point, their current hunger has to be tackled.

The case for food aid

4.2 Hungry people are not usually good competitors in the market place, and they are not the best placed to respond to improved market incentives in the short term. They have limited resources to raise their productivity even if they wanted to sell a surplus of crops or livestock on the market tomorrow. Their persistent hunger compromises the potential benefits of investments and actions meant to stimulate economic growth. Thus, the removal of hunger is the first threshold to be crossed in the eradication of poverty.

4.3 That said, food aid is not necessarily the best or only way to help all the 800 million people suffering from chronic undernutrition in the 1990s. Where chronic undernutrition coexists with well-supplied markets offering food at accessible and stable prices, a better solution may lie with improved health and sanitation interventions, greater investments in literacy and nutrition education, and ration systems or cash transfers that successfully raise the purchasing power of households with the worst hunger.

4.4 By contrast, the case for food aid is strongest where chronic undernutrition co-exists with weak markets that are characterized by erratic supply and wide price fluctuations. The case for

---

[24] Pena, Webb and Haddad (1994)
[25] Quisumbing et al. (1995)
[26] Mosley and Cowley (1991)
[27] Ahmed (1994); Webb (1995)

bringing food aid to complement markets depends largely on local market performance. The rationale is weak if markets function well and non-food interventions can effectively raise access to food among the hungry. But the case for food aid targeted to the most hungry is strong if there is insufficient food in the market and prices are volatile. Food aid can complement markets and offset their weaknesses in several ways:

Food aid in support of agriculture and income generation

4.5 On the one hand, it can be provided to hungry people through labour-intensive works programmes (including food-for-work). Such activities simultaneously address weaknesses in household productivity and deficiencies in purchasing power. Productivity and purchasing power can both be enhanced by food-aided works programmes which support a transfer of resource management techniques, the stabilization of shifting dunes, the establishment of tree and shrub nurseries, the building of small-scale irrigation infrastructure, or the creation of village-level grain and seed banks. The marketing of food produce can also be improved by the construction of feeder roads and bridges. The long-term impact of such assets complement the short-term gains in hunger-alleviation; both enhance local productivity and lead to a reduction in the need for external assistance. There is little risk of such food aid disrupting markets, or causing dependency or disincentives, since food delivered is additional to normal, typically inadequate, consumption.

Market-friendly food aid

4.6 On the other hand, food aid can help to strengthen existing markets by localized actions in the marketing of food, such as local purchases and monetization. Important quantities of food aid are purchased in developing countries, either for use in a deficit region of the same country or in another country. The share of global food aid purchased in developing countries doubled between 1990 and 1994, rising from 6 to almost 12 percent. In 1994, the World Food Programme alone purchased close to 1 million tons of food commodities in developing countries. Such purchases can give a significant boost to local production, trade, the local transport sector and infrastructure development, as well as reducing costs. Furthermore, food transfers based on local purchase are often more firmly grounded in local dietary preferences than food aid based on long-distance shipments.

4.7 Moreover, some food aid can be fully or partially monetized. Monetization can encourage more efficient market performance by promoting private sector participation in marketing rather than channelling food through parastatal companies [28]. Eritrea is one example of a country where nascent private sector engagement in the marketing of food can benefit from a judicious channelling of monetized food resources through local businesses, when cost efficiency can be assured. In other cases, monetization of food aid could offer some potential for challenging a constraining influence on markets of monopolies or cartels. And monetization during emergencies also deserves careful consideration where scope exists for stabilizing local prices and for protecting markets that can be kept functioning.

4.8 A last area in which there may be scope for stimulating local production and marketing lies in micro-nutrient-enriched or blended foods. While experience with such initiatives is limited so far, preliminary signs are that increased attention to micro-nutrient issues will result in demand for locally processed, fortified, and enriched foods for use in projects that have specific nutrition goals. Products of this nature (blended foods for therapeutic and supplementary feeding) are already produced in countries such as Senegal and Malawi.

---

[28] Riely (1995)

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF FOOD AID AND FUTURE NEEDS

5.1 Food aid is not what it was. Its characteristics have changed significantly since food aid became a major form of global resource transfers in the 1950s. For example, the food aid regime of the 1950s and 1960s was one that used surplus food in a few industrialized countries to promote broad economic and foreign policy interests. Some care was taken to avoid displacement by food aid of commercial exports. The Committee on Surplus Disposal was established in 1954 to ensure that food aid was given as a resource that was additional to the "usual marketing requirements" of recipient countries.

5.2 The world food crisis of the early 1970s led to a shift of food aid towards development objectives. Highlighting the food needs of many of the poorest nations, the 1974 World Food Conference raised awareness of the need for greater attention to food supply and stability. As a result, the 1970s and 1980s saw increasing support for project food aid; its share of total food aid increased from 17 percent in 1976/77 to 28 percent in 1983/84 (Table 2). There was also a shift towards grant and multilateral channels for food aid, with greater emphasis being placed on continuity of supply.[29] During the 1980s the Food Aid Convention fixed the level of multi-annual donor commitments at its highest level yet - 7.5 million tons (Table 3).

5.3 The 1990s have so far seen several breaks with the past. Four major changes in the food aid world can be characterized as: a) an increasingly narrow targeting of people facing immediate food insecurity and hunger; b) an increasing focus of resources on countries needing support in the form of food; c) a decline in food aid used as untargeted programme assistance in favour of targeted interventions; and d) a decline in food aid supplies during the mid-1990s. Each of these points is examined in more detail below.

A focus on hungry people, especially in emergencies

5.4 **First**, there has been a shift of attention from national food issues to hungry people. People have come to the forefront of food aid concerns - balance sheets, tonnage figures and surplus disposal have become secondary. As part of this trend there is a new focus on actions against hunger, particularly in the context of humanitarian emergencies. This does not, of course, rule out development interventions, nor minimize their importance. The only lasting solution to hunger is sustainable food security based on investments of a developmental nature. However, development initiatives in vulnerable regions are increasingly linked to the requirements of relief, rehabilitation, disaster preparedness and preventive measures.

5.5 The surge in demand for emergency food aid, associated with the end of the Cold War, reached a record high of 35 percent of total food aid in 1994. During the 1970s, emergency food aid represented some 10 percent of the total; during the first half of the 1990s the share rose to almost 30 percent.[30]

5.6 So far most of the increased share of emergency resources has come at the expense of programme food aid (Figure 2). The share of programme aid, mostly bilateral donations for balance-of-payments support, has fallen from almost 75 percent of total food aid in the 1960s and 1970s to 43 percent in 1994.[31] Levels of project food aid, while also declining in recent years, have remained somewhat more stable. In 1986/87, when world cereal stocks had reached a historic high and real prices for cereals had fallen to a historic low, almost 30 percent of global food aid was provided for development projects. Since then, the share of project food aid has fallen to around 22 percent.

---

29 Uvin (1994); Clay and Singer (1985)

30 WFP (1995)

31 WFP (1995b)

A focus on food-deficit countries

5.7 The **second** trend of the 1990s (linked to the first) is a stronger articulation of a concern - as yet poorly reflected in actual food aid flows - to concentrate food aid on least developed and low-income food deficit countries. The share of global food aid for Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) has fluctuated considerably over time (Table 4). During the 1980s, LIFDCs received between around 90 percent of total food aid. In the 1990s, however, their share has varied between 65 and 88 percent.

5.8 National food insecurity remains a minor determinant of donor food aid allocation decisions. A recent analysis shows that the food security status of recipient countries explains only 7 percent of cross-country variation in per capita food aid transfers.[32] As a result, the countries that receive the largest volumes of food aid are still not necessarily those inhabited by the largest numbers of hungry people.

5.9 Considered from another perspective, food aid accounted for 20 percent or more of the cereal food imports of LIFDCs during the mid-1980s. In 1995/96, a year of high cereal prices, reduced export subsidies and very low stock levels, food aid is expected to account for only 8 percent of the import requirements of such countries. Food aid for the countries who need it most is declining when they need it most.

5.10 Through the Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries, Ministers negotiating the Uruguay Round intended to avoid possible negative effects of such liberalization. Another international body, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, also directed that WFP should concentrate a larger share of its resources on countries in greatest need. More specifically, at least 90 percent of WFP development assistance is to be allocated to low-income food-deficit countries, with at least 50 percent of this to go to least developed countries by 1997.[33]

More targeted interventions

5.11 The **third** major change is that food aid no longer necessarily represents a surplus commodity provided by a small number of countries, and is less used as bilateral programme assistance. It now derives from a more diverse range of donor sources and involves substantial quantities of cash for the procurement of food in developing countries for targeted uses (Table 3). By 1994, as trade liberalization began to take hold and food surpluses in developed countries declined, more than 1.5 million tons of food commodities were procured in developing countries.[34] The Uruguay Round Agreement is likely to contribute to further reductions in structural surpluses of major foodstuffs in traditional donor countries.

5.12 The rising level of food aid procured in response to a specific need is also related to the rise in emergencies. Today's need for rapid responses to large-scale crises, often in situations where normal government channels have been weakened or destroyed, has led many donors to allocate increased responsibility for management of food aid to multilateral institutions and NGOs. In 1994, multilaterals and NGOs together handled 52 percent of global food aid, compared with 28 percent as recently as 1989. The fastest growth has been in the portion delivered through NGOs; the share of food aid handled by these organizations has risen from 10 percent in 1989 to 21 percent in 1994.

---

32 FAO (1994)
33 WFP (1995a)
34 WFP (1995b)

5.13 The relative shift out of programme aid and the increasing role of multilateral institutions and NGOs in handling food aid has brought with it the added benefit for poorest countries that an increasing share of food aid is offered on grant terms. In the 1960s, 75 percent of food aid was provided on a loan basis, whereas 80 to 90 percent of total food aid was offered on a grant basis by the early 1990s.

Declining food aid supply

5.14 The **fourth** change of the 1990s has been an abrupt decline in food aid availability since the record level of over 15 million tons in 1992/93. Forecasts for 1995/96 anticipate a drop to around 8 million tons. It is too early to say whether, or to what extent, this might be linked to trade liberalization. The effects of the Uruguay Round are yet to become clear. Food prices may decline in the longer term as a result of gains in agricultural productivity, the liberalisation of world trade, and/or limited effective demand for tradeable commodities.

5.15 On the other hand, prices may rise in the short-to-medium term as a result of the Uruguay Round agreements.[35] Food aid supply has always responded negatively to higher food prices. There is a significant correlation between world cereal prices and global food aid, especially where programme food aid is concerned (Table 5). What is more, cereal stocks in developed countries are also forecast to fall in 1995/96 to 111 million tons from 213 million tons in 1992/93. This would bring the ratio of world cereal stocks to annual global consumption to its lowest level for 20 years.

5.16 Thus, most analysts see a likely decline in supplies during the coming years.[36] As the Director-General of FAO noted in 1995, "the prospects for future food aid are hardly reassuring."[37] One negative sign was the substantial reduction in minimum annual contributions agreed to by donor countries under the 1995 Food Aid Convention, established at 5.35 million tons of wheat equivalents - down from 7.52 million tons under the 1986 convention. Another worrying sign was the sharp rise in world cereal prices in 1995, partly due to climatic factors coupled with low levels of world cereal stocks; this has been a potent reminder of the volatility of world market prices even at high levels of global food production. Only during the world food crisis of the early 1970s were food aid supplies as low as they are likely to be in the late 1990s.

5.17 The current tightening of global food markets has focused increasing attention on issues of cost-effectiveness and efficiency in food aid. Given the commodity nature of food aid, the amount of resources transferred to the recipients measured in local currency units may be different than those of other forms of aid even if their fiscal costs to the donors are the same. In all cases, however, the key considerations must be whether the needed resource can be provided in time and in ways that actually reach those requiring assistance. This means that market conditions must be a major determinant of where and when food aid is the optimal resource to address hunger. The relative efficiency of addressing hunger through the market or through food aid has to be assessed in each case. Where and when food aid is not the ideal solution, alternative (albeit equally urgent) interventions are to be sought.

Projections of food aid requirements

5.18 The debate surrounding future food aid requirements continues. Global requirements have often been computed by projecting recipient country food (and foreign exchange) balance sheets, with a minimal consideration of requirements based on nutritional goals or of the political economy of

---

[35] The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), (1994); the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) 1995; FAO (1995c)

[36] Taylor (1992); Singer and Shaw (1995)

[37] FAO (1995c)

donor allocation decisions. Nutritional improvement goals have more recently entered into methodologies for projecting requirements. For example, even if the record level of almost 15 million tons of food aid in 1992/93 had been fully targeted on needy individuals and those individuals consumed it all, it would have met less than 50 percent of their "nutritional need" assessed at minimum caloric norms.[38] If food aid alone were used to bring the world's hundreds of millions of malnourished people up to a desired nutritional status (measured in terms of a Basal Metabolic Rate of 1.54), 55 million tons would be required for the purpose by the year 2010 - more than six times the level of total food aid available during 1995.

TASKS AHEAD

6.1 Food aid is a keystone of the international community's attempts to uphold fundamental human rights relating to life and food security. Any genuinely human-focused development cannot ignore the problem of hunger. Hungry people are not well-served by, and cannot effectively compete in, markets even if they are functioning well. Their capacity to participate in economic growth and development is still further constrained when limited resource endowments are compounded by market weaknesses. Food aid can compensate for inadequacies in both endowments and markets by giving people the chance to sustain themselves and enhance their capabilities to participate in the marketplace.

6.2 The guiding principle of food aid must be to reach people who need it most, primarily in food-deficit countries, at times when they need it most, and in ways that achieve lasting impact as well as short term help. Thus, the first claim on scarce food aid resources has to be targeted actions that address one or other of the major dimensions of current hunger. There are therefore three main ways in which food aid, as an increasingly valuable and scarce resource, will need to be refined and strengthened in the coming years.

Saving life, rebuilding livelihoods

6.3 The first goal is to provide timely, appropriate and adequate relief interventions. The main victims of emergencies, women and children, must be brought as partners into the dynamics of relief design and implementation. Women must be the principal managers of food aid resources, and they should be able to move on with their lives after a crisis with new skills in hand. Even emergency interventions have long term as well immediate aspects; where possible they should be treated as opportunities for investing in the future.

6.4 Complex emergencies require political action as well as humanitarian responses. They must be addressed not only by food aid but by diplomacy and debate that allows for a resolution of the causes of deep-seated resentment fuelling conflict. And emergency interventions must lead progressively, and as early as possible, into post-crisis rehabilitation. Relief and rehabilitation initiatives must ensure that the resilience of households and rural economies are strengthened and that development investments can subsequently take hold.

Attacking hunger from birth

6.5 Secondly, the focus must always be on people. It will be especially important to alleviate the hunger of women and children at critical times in their lives. Their well-being during these times of particular need has a bearing not only on their own future, but also on their ability to contribute to development in general. Food deficiencies early in life will lead to health problems, loss of mental

[38] Ezekiel (1989); Missiaen et al. (1995)

vigour and reduced productivity. Many such losses can never be recouped; but they can and will be compounded if inadequate nutrition continues.

6.6 Targeted actions are necessary both to tackle food insufficiencies head on through interventions focused on enhancing nutrition and to enable hungry people to benefit from health, education, skills and income-earning initiatives. In this sense, food is a preventative medicine. And providing food aid to households through women further enhances its potential as a resource for human growth. Women are central to the fight against hunger.

Aiding people to gain access to food

6.7 The chronically hungry have a difficult task in fulfilling either their human or economic potential. Since hunger perpetuates poverty, persistent hunger must be removed if sustainable food security is to be attained. Consequently, the third priority must be food aid interventions that assist food insecure households by-passed by mainstream development activities, particularly in situations where there is insufficient food in the market and food prices are volatile. Food aid can provide direct assistance to people who lack purchasing power, and can strengthen markets by building transport infrastructure or enhancing marketing systems through local monetization and local food purchases. Food aid is not an inherent competitor to, or disruptor of, the market; it can and should be a natural partner. The hungry of the world will best be served through an enhanced partnership in the coming decades.

6.8 Of course, food aid is not the answer to all hunger in the world. Some of it can better be addressed through non-food resources and/or the more generalized benefits of macroeconomic development. But, targeted food aid is the premier resource for addressing the urgent, current needs of millions of hungry people in food-deficit countries. For those needs to be adequately addressed in coming years, the level of targeted aid reaching the hungry in these countries needs to be protected from fluctuations in global supply, particularly in years of high world food prices, and enhanced according to need.

A sharper focus for the future

6.9 Food aid is a scarce resource. This is no longer debatable. It is a premium resource - a resource to serve people rather than a bi-product of agriculture. By extension, more will be demanded of food aid than in the past. Food aided projects will have to match the standards of cost-effectiveness and efficiency of capital-assisted projects. And food aid will have to do more than save lives. It will have to sustain and enhance those lives.

6.10 How can this be achieved? The answer lies, first, with a reallocation of supplies:

- Shifting current food aid allocations from less-poor recipient countries towards most needy cases (least-developed and low-income food deficit countries, of which there were 88 in the developing world in 1995).

- Targeting a greater portion of food aid towards the poorest regions of those countries, avoiding unsustainable national-level programmes.

- Ensuring that food resources are effectively delivered into the hands of people who have the most responsibility for household food security, typically women.

- Achieving greater stability in food aid supplies, at least for interventions designed to help the most hungry, particularly in years of volatile world food prices.

6.11 The second part of the answer lies with a greater mutual support between food and non-food resources. Food aid alone will not be able to adequately address the scale of hunger that will face us in coming decades. Efforts aimed at raising agricultural productivity and output as well as purchasing power among hungry people and food-deficit countries must be stepped up. Yet, neither will increased food production or complementary financial transfers be sufficient to tackle the problems of food security, particularly among the millions facing hunger in more remote regions. While food deficits related to 'permanent' emergencies, weak markets, inappropriate economic policies and armed conflict continue to cripple growth in many countries there will be a crucial role to be played by targeted food aid.

6.12 Closer partnerships are needed between food and non-food resources to ensure that hunger is treated as a mainstream development problem. Recent efforts to improve the integration of food aid into recipient country food security and nutrition strategies and safety-net programmes have to be broadened and strengthened. The planning of food assistance on the basis of country-specific strategies, and its integration into other assistance, is a first step toward more effective partnerships. Beyond that, government, donor and NGO partners all need to be present and effective in regions, and among households, worst-affected by hunger if we are to maximize the impact of food aid and other investments on hungry people.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Food aid shipments (cereals) by recipient regions, 1971/72-1994/95

Year	World (mn tons)	Sub-Saharan Africa %	Latin America %	Asia %	Other %	Ex-USSR/Yugo as % of Other
1971/72	12.5	4	6	74	17	n/a
1972/73	10.0	5	5	72	18	n/a
1973/74	5.8	20	6	55	19	n/a
1974/75	8.4	11	7	68	15	n/a
1975/76	6.8	11	8	60	22	n/a
1976/77	9.0	10	3	57	31	n/a
1977/78	9.2	14	4	53	29	n/a
1978/79	9.5	12	6	51	30	n/a
1979/80	8.9	18	8	46	28	n/a
1980/81	8.9	27	7	40	27	n/a
1981/82	9.1	26	8	32	34	n/a
1982/83	9.2	28	14	32	26	n/a
1983/84	9.8	28	13	34	25	n/a
1984/85	12.5	40	11	27	22	n/a
1985/86	10.9	35	15	31	19	n/a
1986/87	12.6	26	15	34	25	n/a
1987/88	13.5	28	19	35	18	n/a
1988/89	10.2	27	20	33	20	n/a
1989/90	11.3	24	16	28	32	n/a
1990/91	12.4	27	14	28	31	34
1991/92	13.1	34	14	27	25	58
1992/93	15.2	39	10	16	34	84
1993/94	12.6	26	13	21	41	92
1994/95*	8.4	36	12	28	23	87

Source: FAO Agrostat and FAO Food Outlook, Aug./Sept.1995
*/ Estimate

NB: This and all subsequent tables present data on cereal food aid only.

Non-cereal food aid has been increasing in importance over the past decades. As a percentage of food aid in cereals it grew from some 6 percent in the 1970s, approximately 8 percent in the 1980s to some 12 percent in the 1990s. To arrive at the approximate total volume of food aid, the above figures for cereal food aid might be multiplied by a factor 1.06 for the 1970s, 1.08 for the 1980s and 1.12 for the 1990s (FAO Agrostat and WFP INTERFAIS).

In terms of its value for most of the past food aid accounted for around 10 percent of total Official Development Assistance (WFP/CFA Food Aid Reviews).

Table 2: Food aid shipments (cereals) by category, 1975/76-1994/95

Year	World (mn tons)	Programme %	Project %	Emergency %
1975/76*	6.8	71	19	10
1976/77	9.0	77	17	6
1977/78	9.2	71	19	10
1978/79**	9.5	72	18	10
1979/80	8.9	70	20	10
1980/81	8.9	60	26	14
1981/82	9.1	52	27	21
1982/83	9.2	62	26	12
1983/84	9.8	57	28	15
1984/85	12.5	53	21	25
1985/86	10.9	46	24	30
1986/87	12.6	55	29	17
1987/88	13.5	54	27	19
1988/89***	10.2	54	25	21
1989/90	11.3	58	21	20
1990/91	12.4	56	21	23
1991/92	13.1	52	19	29
1992/93	15.2	57	15	28
1993/94	12.6	53	18	29
1994/95*	8.4	40	25	35

*/ WFP/CFA, Review of Food Policies and Programmes, 1978/82
**/ WFP, Food Aid: Flows–Directions–Uses, 1987/88/89
***/ WFP INTERFAIS, Food Aid Flows, 1995

Table 3: Food aid shipments (cereals) by donor, 1971/72-1995/96 and obligations under the Food Aid Convention (FAC)

Year	All Donors	U.S.A	EU	Canada	Japan	Australia	Other Donors
			(million tons)				
1971/72	12.5	9.2	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.2	0.3
1972/73	10.0	6.9	1.0	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.4
1973/74	5.8	3.2	1.2	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.2
1974/75	8.4	4.7	1.4	0.6	0.2	0.3	1.1
1975/76	6.8	4.3	0.9	1.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
1976/77	9.0	6.1	1.1	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.4
1977/78	9.2	6.0	1.4	0.9	0.1	0.3	0.6
1978/79	9.5	6.2	1.2	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.7
1979/80	8.9	5.3	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.6
1980/81	8.9	5.2	1.3	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.6
1981/82	9.1	5.3	1.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6
1982/83	9.2	5.4	1.6	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.5
1983/84	9.8	5.7	1.9	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.5
1984/85	12.5	7.5	2.5	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.8
1985/86	10.9	6.7	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.3	0.7
1986/87	12.6	7.9	1.9	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.7
1987/88	13.5	7.9	2.6	1.1	0.6	0.4	1.0
1988/89	10.2	5.3	2.2	1.2	0.4	0.4	0.8
1989/90	11.3	6.0	3.3	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.3
1990/91	12.4	7.3	2.6	1.1	0.5	0.3	0.5
1991/92	13.1	7.1	3.7	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6
1992/93	15.2	8.5	4.1	0.7	0.4	0.2	1.2
1993/94	12.6	8.3	2.7	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.5
1994/95*	8.4	4.2	2.7	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.3
1995/96**	7.6	3.2	3.0	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4
Minimum Annual Contribution:							
FAC 95:	5.4	2.5	1.8	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1
FAC 86:	7.5	4.5	1.8	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.1

*/ Estimate
**/ Forecast

Sources: FAO Agrostat and FAO Food Outlook, Aug./Sept. 1995
Food Aid Convention 1995 and Food Aid Committee, Estimated Shipments in 1993/94

Table 4: Share of global food aid reaching low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs), 1971/72-1995/96

Year	Food Aid to LIFD Countries (mn tons)	Share of Global Food Aid %	Share of LIFD Food Imports %
1971/72	7.0	56	39
1972/73	6.0	60	24
1973/74	4.0	69	13
1974/75	6.7	80	21
1975/76	5.3	78	20
1976/77	7.1	79	27
1977/78	7.1	77	23
1978/79	7.7	81	19
1979/80	7.6	85	18
1980/81	7.3	82	15
1981/82	7.7	85	15
1982/83	8.2	89	15
1983/84	9.3	95	18
1984/85	11.5	92	23
1985/86	10.2	94	22
1986/87	11.4	90	24
1987/88	12.0	89	21
1988/89	8.7	85	15
1989/90	8.2	73	14
1990/91	9.7	78	18
1991/92	11.0	84	15
1992/93	11.1	73	16
1993/94	8.2	65	12
1994/95*	7.4	88	10
1995/96**	6.0	79	8

*/ Estimate
**/ Forecast

Source: FAO Agrostat and FAO Food Outlook, Aug./Sept. 1995

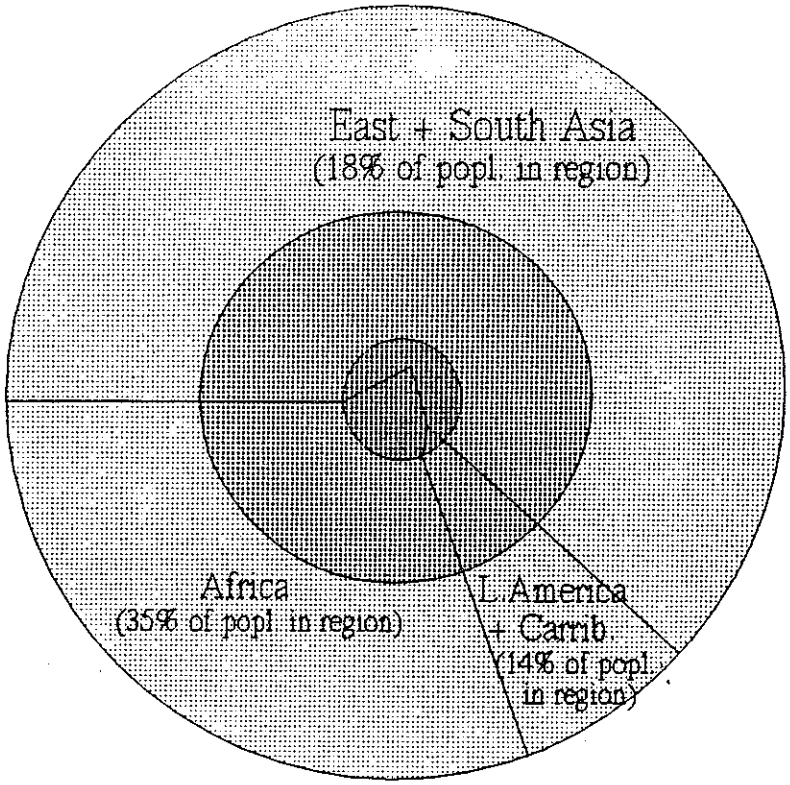
Table 5: Food aid and prices, 1971/72-1995/96

YEAR	Export Price Wht USNo2HW US-$/ton	Global Cereal Food Aid (mn tons)	Exp. Price (Y+1)/Y %	Global F.Aid (Y+1)/Y %	LIFD F.Aid (Y+1)/Y %	Progr. F.Aid (Y+1)/Y %	Multilt F.Aid (Y+1)/Y %
1971/72	60	12.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1972/73	91	10.0	52	-20	-14	n/a	20
1973/74	177	5.8	95	-42	-33	n/a	-36
1974/75	161	8.4	-9	45	68	n/a	47
1975/76	151	6.8	-6	-19	-21	n/a	-21
1976/77	111	9.0	-26	32	34	44	43
1977/78	113	9.2	2	2	0	-6	19
1978/79	139	9.5	23	3	8	4	8
1979/80	170	8.9	22	-6	-1	-8	3
1980/81	179	8.9	5	0	-4	-14	1
1981/82	170	9.1	-5	2	5	-13	-4
1982/83	160	9.2	-6	1	6	21	5
1983/84	154	9.8	-4	7	13	-2	5
1984/85	148	12.5	-4	28	24	19	5
1985/86	129	10.9	-13	-13	-11	-25	-11
1986/87	110	12.6	-15	16	12	38	27
1987/88	123	13.5	12	7	5	6	10
1988/89	167	10.2	36	-24	-28	-25	-18
1989/90	161	11.3	-4	11	-6	21	18
1990/91	118	12.4	-27	10	18	5	14
1991/92	150	13.1	27	6	13	-3	12
1992/93	143	15.2	-5	16	1	28	n/a
1993/94	143	12.6	0	-17	-26	-23	n/a
1994/95*	157	8.4	10	-33	-10	-49	n/a
1995/96**	188	7.6	20	-10	-19	n/a	n/a

*/ Estimate
**/ Forecast

Source: FAO Agrostat and FAO Food Outlook (all data except on mulitlateral food aid)
WFP/CFA Review of Food Aid Policies and Programmes, 1981/84/88 and WFP INTERFAIS

Figure 1: Types, regions and dimensions of hunger



Acute hunger (30-50 million victims of disaster) *

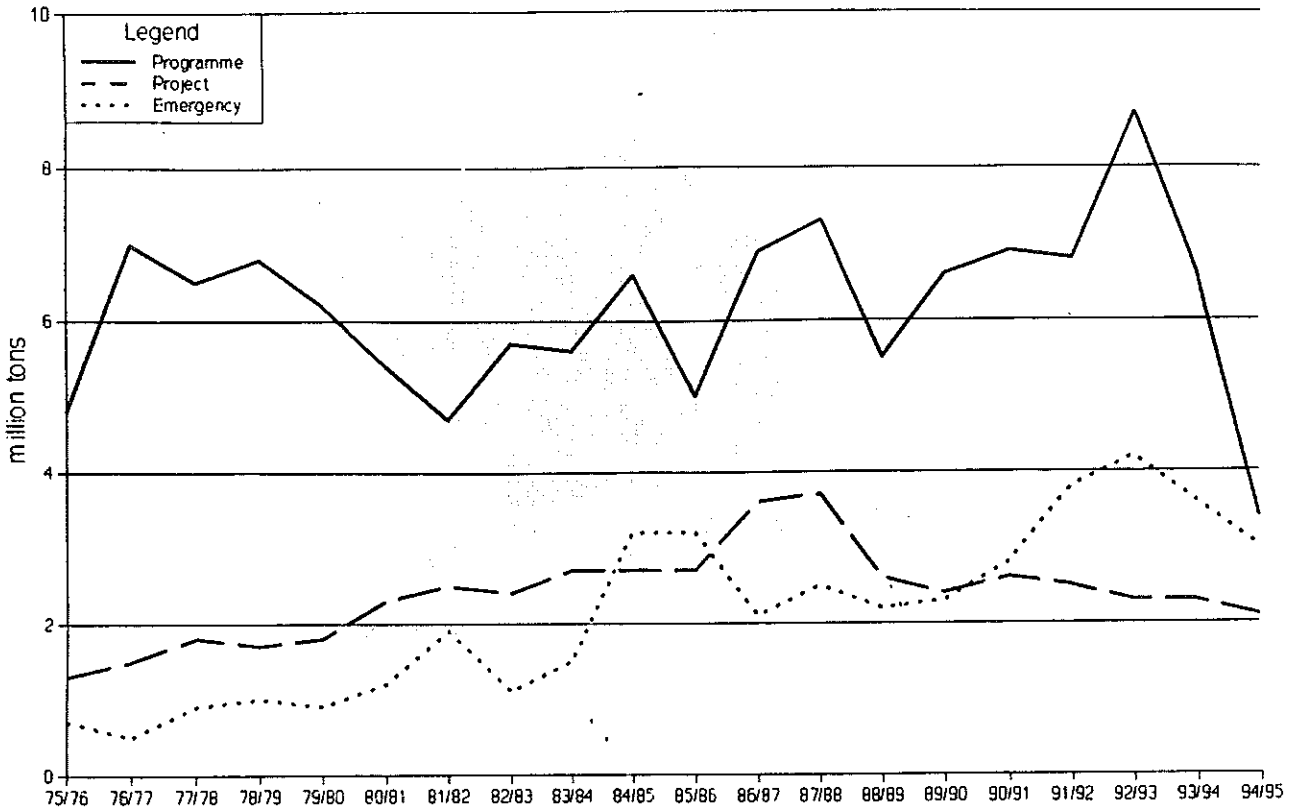
Chronically undernourished mothers and children in critical times of their lives: 200-250 million

Chronically undernourished people: 700-1000 million

*/ Not included are some 20 million refugees and displaced people in countries without chronic hunger

Source: FAO 1995, Rosegrant et.al. 1995; ACC/SCN 1995, Report of UN SG 1995

Figure 2: Food aid shipments (cereals) by category, 1975/76-1994/95



BIBLIOGRAPHY

ACC/SCN (Administrative Committee on Coordination/Sub-committee on Nutrition), (1993), *Second Report on the World Nutrition Situation*, Volume I, Geneva: ACC/SCN

Ahmed, A. (1994), *Food Consumption and Nutritional Effects of Targeted Food Interventions in Bangladesh*, Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Von Braun, J., T. Teklu and P. Webb, (1991), *Labor-intensive Public Works for Food Security: Experience in Africa*, Working Papers on Food Subsidies No. 6. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Broca, S. and P. Oram (1991). *Study on the location of the poor*, International Food Policy Research Institute, Mimeo.

Clay, E. J. and H. W. Singer (1985), *Food aid and development: Issues and evidence*, A survey of the literature since 1977 on the role and impact of food aid in developing countries. Occasional Paper No. 3. Rome: World Food Programme.

Ezekiel, H (1989), *Medium-Term estimates of Demand-Based Food Aid Requirements and their Variability*. Reprint No. 177. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (1995a). *Elements for Policy Inclusion in a Draft Policy Document and Plan of Action on Universal Food Security*. Document CL 108/12 for the 108th Session of the Council. Rome.

_____, (1995b), *Food, Agriculture and Food Security: The Global Dimension. Historical development, present situation, future prospects*. Document WFS 96/TECH/1 prepared for the World Food Summit. Rome: FAO.

_____ (1995c), *Impact of the Uruguay Round on Agriculture*, Report to the Committee on Commodity Problems, Sixtieth Session, Rome, 3-7 April 1995 (Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda). Rome: FAO.

_____ (1994), *Assessment of the Current World Food Security Situation and Recent Policy Developments*, Document CFS:94/2. Rome: FAO.

Haddad, L., Bhattarai, M. Immink and S. Kumar (1995), *Household Food Security and Diarrhoea as Determinants of Nutrition: New Trade-offs and New Opportunities Towards 2020*, Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Hansch, S (1995), *An Explosion of Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, In Countries in Crisis: Hunger 1996. Sixth Annual Report on the State of World Hunger. Washington, D.C.: Bread for the World Institute, pp. 1-7.

Hoet, J. J. (1995), *Role of Foetal and Infant Growth and Nutrition in Causality of CVD and Diabetes in Later Life*. WHO Collaborating Centre. Louvain University, Belgium.

IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (1995), World Disasters Report 1995, Geneva, Switzerland: IFRC.

Missiaen, M., S. Shapouri and R. Trostle (1995), *Food Aid Needs and Availabilities: Projections for 2005*, ERS Staff Paper No. AGES 9523. Economic Research Service, Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture.

Mosley, W. H. and P. Cowley (1991), *The Challenge of World Health*, Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.

ODI (Overseas Development Institute) (1995), *Developing Countries in the WTO*. ODI Briefing Paper. No.3 (1995). London: ODI.

Pena, C., P. Webb and L. Haddad (1994), *Women's Economic Advancement Through Agricultural Change: A Review of Donor Experience*. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, Mimeo.

Pelletier, D. (1994), *The relationship between child anthropometry and mortality in developing countries*. The Journal of Nutrition. 124 (10) Supplement.

Pollitt, E., K. Gorman, P. L. Engle, J. A. Rivera and R. Martorell (1995), *Nutrition in early life and the fulfillment of intellectual potential*. The Journal of Nutrition. 125 (4) Supplement: 1068S-77S.

Quisumbing, A. R., L. R. Brown, H. S. Feldstein, L. Haddad and C. Pena (1995), *Women: The Key to Food Security*. Food Policy Report. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Ravallion, M. (1987), *Markets and Famines*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Riely, F (1995), *Addressing Food Insecurity in Eritrea*, Report prepared for World Food Programme/Eritrea. Department of International Health and Development, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Tulane University, New Orleans. Mimeo.

Rosegrant, M., M. Agcaoili-Sombilla and N. D. Perez (1995), *Global Food Projections to 2020: Implications for Investment*, Food, Agriculture and the Environment Discussion Paper. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Sharma, M., L. Brown, A. Qureshi and M. Garcia (1995), *An Ecoregional Perspective on Malnutrition*, 2020 Vision Brief 14. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Singer, H. W. and J. Shaw (1995), *A Future Food Aid Regime: Implications of the Final Act of the GATT Uruguay Round*, Discussion Paper No. 352, Brighton, England: Institute of Development Studies.

Sivard, R. L (1994), *World Military and Social Expenditure 1994*, Washington, D.C.

Stewart, F (1993), *War and Underdevelopment: Can Economic Analysis Help Reduce the Costs?* Working Paper No. 56. Queen Elizabeth House. Oxford University. Oxford.

Taylor, D (1992), *Implications of the Uruguay Round for food aid*. Food Policy, April:141-49.

United Nations. (1995a). *Action proposed on trade, aid and debt*. Africa Recovery. 9 (2): 6-7.

_____ (1995b), *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*, Social Statistics and Indicators Series K. No.12. New York: United Nations.

_____ (1995c), *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*. Document A/50/50/Rev.1. Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, Fiftieth session, Item 20 (a). New York, NY.

ECA (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa) (1994), *Anticipated Impact of the Uruguay Round Agreements on African Economies: A Preliminary Analysis*. Document E/ECA/CM.20/31 for the Fifteenth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole, Addis Ababa, 26-30 April 1994. Addis Ababa: ECA.

ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations) (1995), *Summary of the survey of economic and social conditions in Africa, 1994*. Report E/1995/42 to the Substantive Session of 1995, Geneva, 26 June-28 July 1995.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) (1995), *Refugees at a Glance*. Information brief: UNHCR Liaison Office. New York.

UNICEF (United Nations Childrens Fund) (1995), *The State of the World's Children 1995*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press for UNICEF.

USCR (United States Committee for Refugees) (1995), *World Refugee Survey 1995*, Washington, D.C.; USCR.

Uvin, P (1994), *The International Organization of Hunger*, London: John Wiley.

Webb, P (1995), *Employment Programs for Food Security in Rural and Urban Africa: Experiences in Niger and Zimbabwe*. In Employment for Poverty Reduction and Food Security. Edited by J. von Braun. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute pp. 174-200.

Webb, P. and J. von Braun (1994), *Famine and Food Security in Ethiopia: Lessons for Africa*, London: John Wiley.

WFP (World Food Programme) (1995a). WFP Mission Statement. Rome: WFP.

_____ (1995b), Interfais. Rome: WFP.

WHO (World Health Organization), (1992), *The Prevalence of Anaemia in Women: A Tabulation of Available Information*, Geneva: WHO.