



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



PEACE AND FOOD SECURITY

Investing in resilience to
sustain rural livelihoods
amid conflict

Includes
TECHNICAL NOTE

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FACTS AND FIGURES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

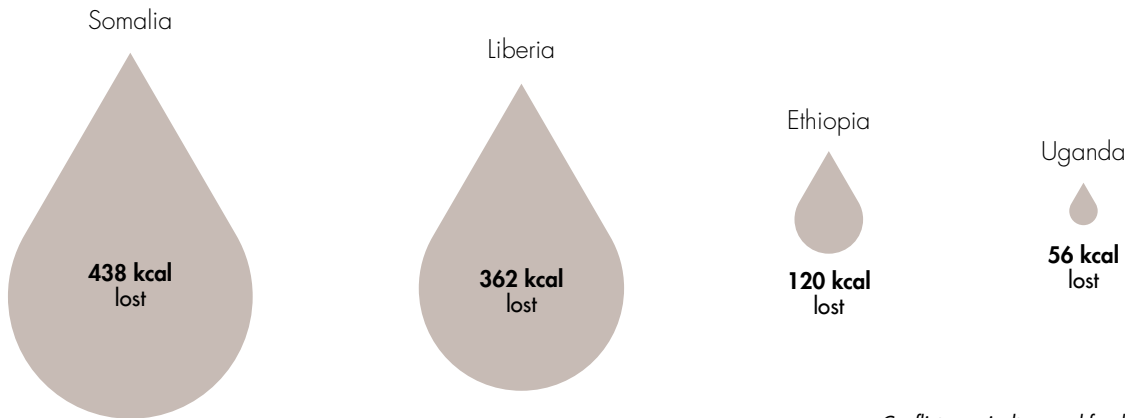
8 Every day in 2014, conflicts and violence forced approximately 42,500 people to flee their homes and seek safety either internally or across borders. Fewer **refugees** (only 1%) have returned, less than at any point over the past 30 years.

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

**CONFLICT,
VIOLENCE AND
HUNGER ARE
CLOSELY
CORRELATED**

IMPACT OF LATE 20TH CENTURY CIVIL WARS ON HUNGER

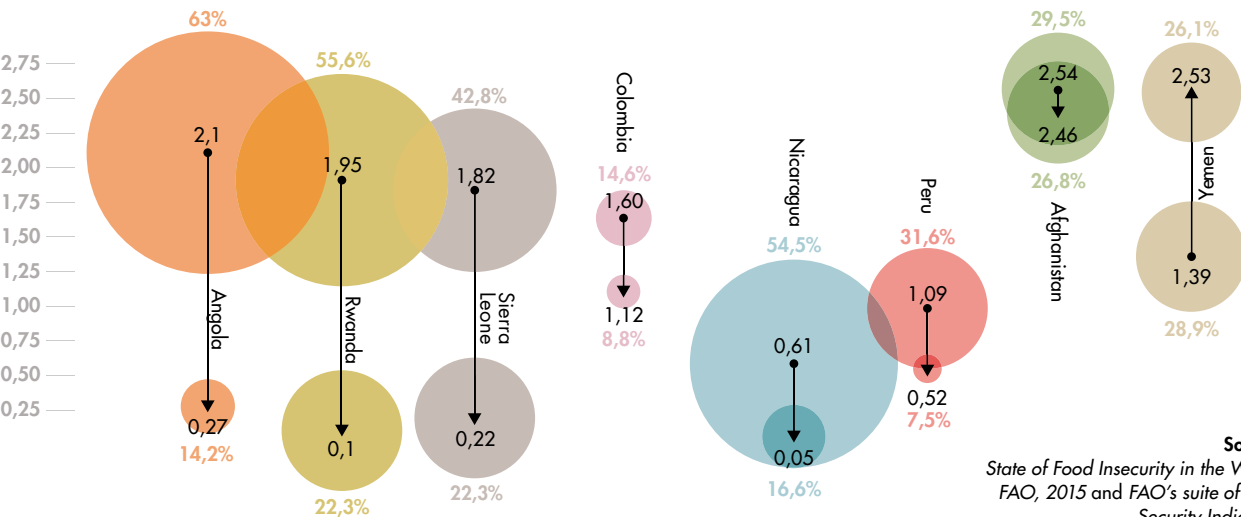
in terms of average per capita lost food energy



Source:
Conflicts, agriculture and food security. FAO, 2000.

CORRELATION BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND HUNGER

Violence index ↓ Hunger percentage



Source:
State of Food Insecurity in the World.
FAO, 2015 and FAO's suite of Food
Security Indicators

ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

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

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY DURING CONFLICT

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

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

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

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

INFORMATION FOR EARLY ACTION

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

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

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

SOUTH SUDAN

Hunger is rampant
among displaced persons.
©FAO/Burgeon



ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

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

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

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

humanitarian assistance for food security, helping to mitigate the humanitarian impact of recent conflicts (see figure on page 5).

SUPPORTING REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

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

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

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

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





NIGER

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

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE HELP MANAGE CONFLICT RISKS

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

CONTROLLING DISEASE, CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE

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

ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

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

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

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

MITIGATING AND PREVENTING PASTORALIST CONFLICT

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

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

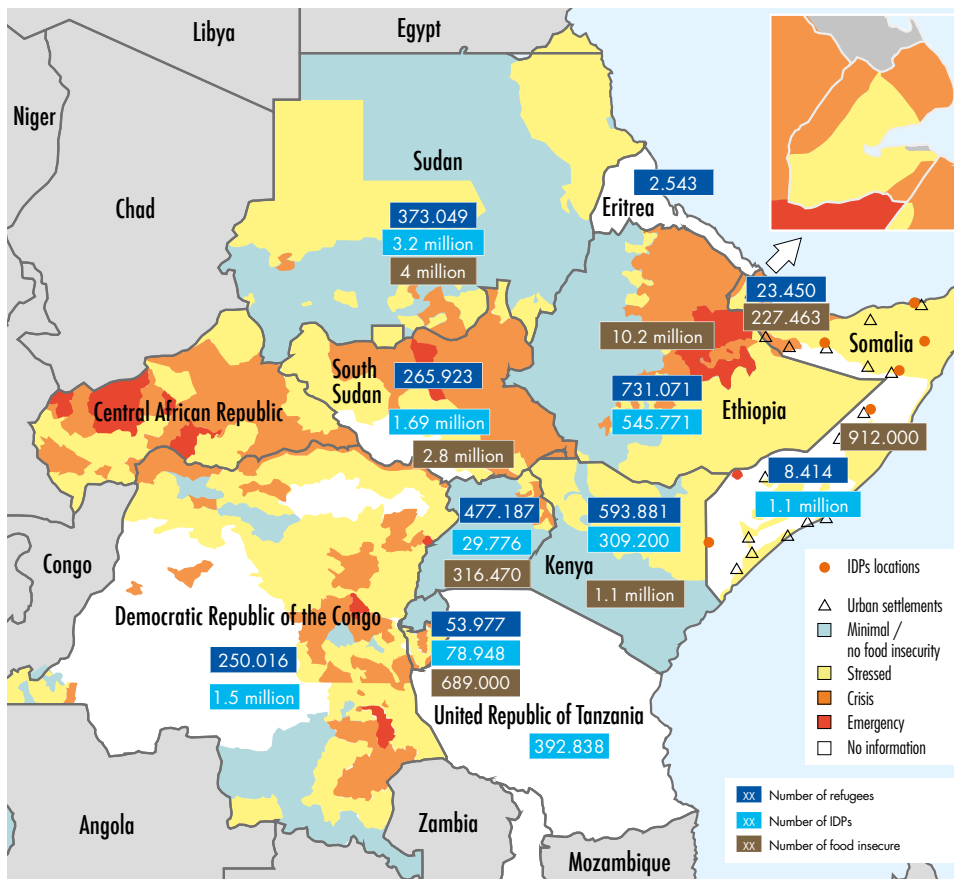
To contribute to wider peace-building efforts, FAO conducted successful PFS exchange visits between communities on each side of the border to help mitigate the frequent livestock raiding. Although most PFS members

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

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

**INVESTING
IN RURAL
LIVELIHOODS
CONSOLIDATES
PEACE**

FOOD INSECURITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE REGION - FEBRUARY 2016



REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SITUATION

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

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LAND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAO'S WORK

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

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AMIDST CONFLICT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PEACE, CONFLICT **AND** **FOOD SECURITY**

What do we know about the linkages?

KEY FINDINGS

ON CONFLICT AND FOOD SECURITY

- > Most conflicts mainly affect rural areas and their populations. This is particularly true for civil conflicts, nowadays the most common form of armed conflict.
- > Conflict has strong and unambiguous adverse effects on food security and nutrition. It is the major driver of food insecurity and malnutrition, both acute and chronic.
- > Conflict has lasting impacts on human development as a result of increased malnutrition, which tends to affect children the most and leave lifelong physical and/or mental handicaps.
- > Causal effects of the conflict-food security nexus vary across conflict zones but common features are disruption of food production and food systems, plundering of crops and livestock and loss of assets and incomes, hence directly and indirectly affecting food access.

ON WHETHER FOOD INSECURITY TRIGGERS CONFLICT

- > Food insecurity can also be a source of conflict, but not necessarily so. Where it is, it is never the one single factor behind the strife.
- > Causal effects of the food security-conflict nexus include dispossession of assets (including land and livestock) and threats to food security (including sudden food price increases), but in conjunction with other forms of grievance and discontent.

ON PEACE DIVIDENDS AND FOOD SECURITY

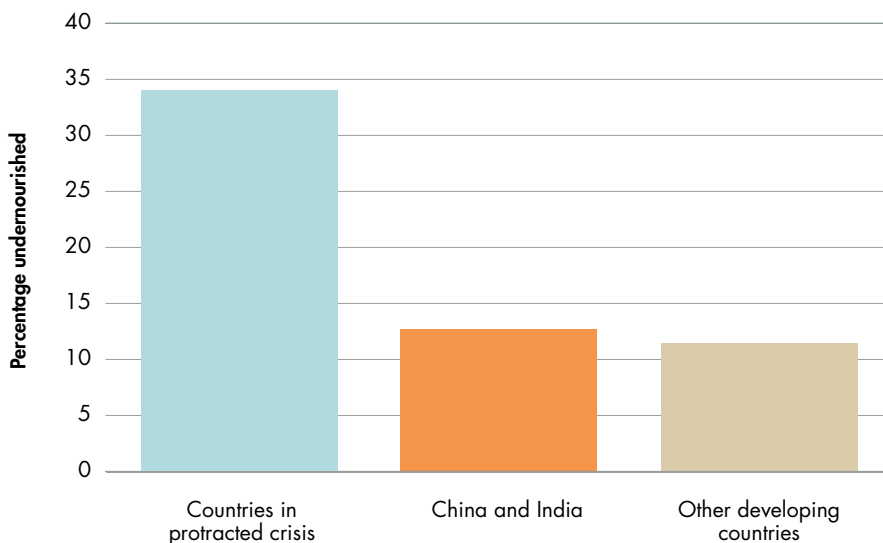
- > Building resilience through peacebuilding efforts is critical for food security and nutrition.
- > Little is known about how, and to what extent, improved food security could prevent conflict, and build and sustain peace. Yet, depending on context-specific conditions, food aid and social protection, as well as helping communities complete harvests, food security tends to contribute significantly to peacebuilding.

COLOMBIA

Farmers of Balboa, a village some 140 km from Popayan, the capital of Cauca Province.
©FAO/Mattioli

FAO data show that, on average, the proportion of people who are undernourished is almost three times as high in countries in protracted crisis than in other developing countries (Figure 1). While protracted crises are typically caused by multiple factors, conflict is nearly always one of them. Not all countries in protracted crisis present very high levels of undernourishment because, in some of these countries, crises are localized to certain areas or regions. In 2013, there were approximately 167 million undernourished people in countries in protracted crisis – roughly 21 percent of the world's undernourished people.

PROPORTION OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE IS ABOUT THREE TIMES HIGHER IN COUNTRIES IN PROTRACTED CRISIS (PERCENTAGE OF UNDERNOURISHED IN 2012-14)



Source: FAO.

Several aspects of the relationship between food, hunger, peace and conflict have been well explored and documented. First, conflict tends to have a strong adverse impact on hunger and food security, and this finding is uncontested. Second, there is evidence that high food prices and lack of access to food have contributed to political instability and civil strife.

This relationship is nuanced and needs to be given more careful consideration. Third, there are indications that food security and improved rural livelihoods may contribute to the mitigation and prevention of conflicts and to securing sustainable peace. However, the nature and strength of this relationship has been underexplored.

This note provides a succinct summary of the main literature and some evidence on the hunger-conflict-peace relationship. What is clear from the literature is that a deeper exploration of the relationships between conflict, food security and peace would provide a stronger basis for designing effective interventions.

THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON FOOD SECURITY

Conflict entails enormous and multifaceted costs, including direct human suffering and catastrophic socioeconomic disruption, which can significantly impede economic and social progress. Most conflicts mainly affect rural areas and their populations, with heavy impacts on agricultural production and rural livelihoods. This is particularly true for civil conflicts, which in recent years have become the most common form of armed conflict.¹

Conflict can reduce the amount of food available, disrupt people's access to food, limit families' access to food preparation facilities and health care, and increase uncertainty about satisfying future needs for food and nutrition (Simmons, 2013). Poverty rates are 20 percentage points higher in countries affected by repeated cycles of violence over the last three decades. Every year of violence in a country is associated with lagging poverty reduction of nearly one percentage point (World Bank, 2011).

Countries with the highest levels of undernourishment tend to be those engaged in violent conflict, or that have recently emerged from it. High risk of conflicts is a key characteristic of fragile states and the probability of a high burden of hunger rises exponentially with the degree of fragility (Figure 2). The Central African Republic and Chad are among the worst-scoring countries and both have experienced violent conflict and political instability in recent years. In contrast, in Angola, Ethiopia and Rwanda, hunger levels have fallen substantially since their large scale civil wars of the 1990s and 2000s ended. Ethiopia was still considered in protracted crisis in 2010, but managed to reach the MDG 1c target of halving the proportion of the undernourished in its population, thanks to sustained political commitment and efforts to target interventions to improve food production and nutrition (FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 2015). This commitment probably became possible as the conflict subsided, and helped to sustain more peaceful conditions.

Although the causal effects may differ across conflict zones, commonly observed features are that conflicts disrupt food production through physical destruction and plundering of crops and livestock, harvests and food reserves; they prevent and discourage farming; they disrupt food transportation systems; they destroy farm assets and capital; they conscript or entice young men to fight, taking them away from their work on the farm; and they suppress income-earning opportunities and occupations. Conflict also makes it difficult for governments and humanitarian actors to reach those in need.

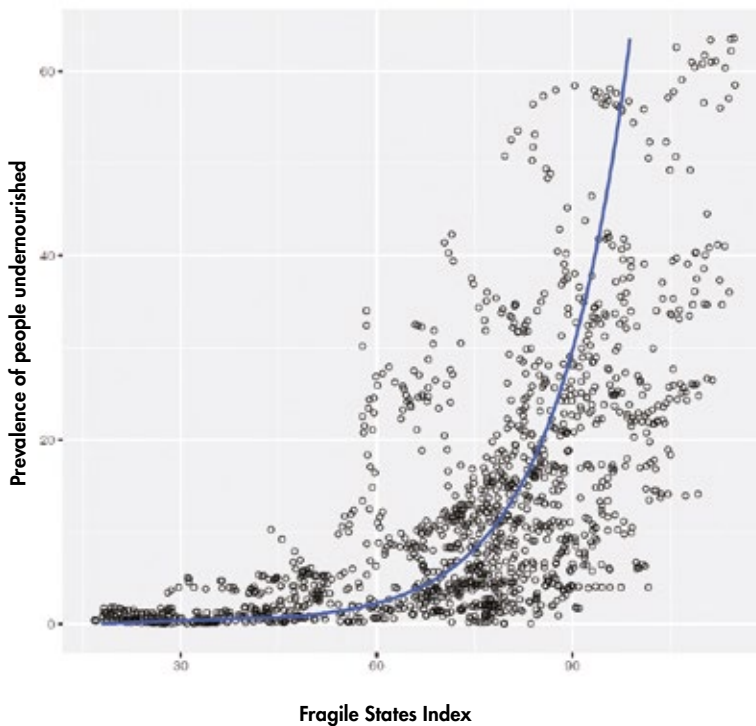
1 Center for Systemic Peace. 2012. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/>.

Civil conflicts are those between a state and an opposition group that aims to take power over the central government, or in a region, or to change government policies.

2 The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. 2011. Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011: lethal encounters. GDAVD: Geneva. (<http://www.genevadeclaration.org/measurability/global-burden-of-armed-violence/global-burden-of-armed-violence-2011.html>).

3 <http://www.fao.org/somalia/news/detail-events/en/c/247642/>.

THE BURDEN OF HUNGER RAPIDLY RISES WITH THE DEGREE OF FRAGILITY (ALL COUNTRIES, 2006-2014)



Note: The fragile states index is based on twelve indicators of state vulnerability: social (4), economic (2), and political (6). The higher the index the greater the risk of violence and conflict. The threshold between situations of “stability” and “fragility” is 70, right at the point in the graph where the probability of high prevalence of undernourishment rises exponentially. Each point in the graph refers to country estimates for each year during 2006-2014.

Source: FAO (for PoU data) and Fund for Peace (for fragile states index).

The lasting effect of conflicts is manifest in its impact on nutrition, especially undernutrition during early childhood with many of those affected suffering from lifelong physical and/or mental handicaps.

Mortality caused by conflict through food insecurity and famine can far exceed deaths caused directly by violence. Between 2004 and 2009 approximately 55 000 people a year lost their lives as a direct result of conflict or terrorism.² In contrast, as a result of famine caused by drought and conflict, more than 250 000 died in Somalia alone between 2010 and 2012.³

An ‘unheralded achievement’ of the past 50 years has been the end of the age of ‘calamitous famines’ – those that kill more than one million people – and a significant reduction in ‘great famines’ – those that kill

100 000 people or more (de Waal, 2015). It is posited that this may be due to the interrelated effects of factors such as the end of the Cold War, the adoption of international human rights norms and the rise of globalisation. This is not to infer that famines are over – but today’s are mostly caused by violent conflict, exacerbated by natural disasters and are more often local (Keen, 2008).

Nonetheless, acute and chronic hunger remains a global problem, and severe hunger can exist even without conflict. A number of South Asian and African countries face serious or alarming levels of hunger despite their relatively stable and peaceful recent history.

CAN FOOD INSECURITY LEAD TO CONFLICT?

As clearly indicated in the literature, violent conflict is the major driver of food insecurity and malnutrition, both acute and chronic. However, the causes of armed conflict have been the subject of lengthy and controversial debate. The conclusion of a synthesis of this literature (World Bank, 2011) is that there is no simple causal explanation for conflict. Conflict comes in many forms, and its causes are complex, nonlinear, and mediated by a host of factors.

People resort to violence due to a broad spectrum of threats to their human security. This may include threats to their food security or - of equal importance - because they have been dispossessed. Other factors include loss of assets and other threats to their livelihoods, together with economic and/or political marginalisation. The precise contribution of hunger and food insecurity to conflict is difficult to assess [Global Hunger Index (GHI), 2015]. Some of the causes, such as dispossession and lack of access to resources, are directly associated with reduced access to food.

Greater attention has been given to the links between food security and political instability after the first significant global rise in food prices in 2008, which coincided with civil unrest in over 40 countries (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011). The Arab Spring, which toppled governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, had a consistent motivating factor - the price of food. The protests in Tunisia, which signalled the start of the Arab Spring domino effect, were initially demonstrations against high bread prices. While public outrage over high food prices was not the only cause, it is generally perceived as an important one.

A recent study which explored whether food prices cause social unrest (Bellemare, 2015) concluded that the answer is a qualified 'yes'. It argued that although rising food prices appear to cause food riots, food price volatility is negatively associated with or unrelated to social unrest.

While food insecurity may trigger, fuel or sustain conflicts, the literature stresses that this is not the only cause. Sudden and unexpected food price rises, or the reduction or removal of subsidies on basic foodstuffs and cooking fuel can

be a catalyst for civil and political unrest. In other words, they may become the channel through which other, wider grievances such as poverty, unemployment (particularly of youth), low incomes, unpaid salaries, political marginalisation and access to basic services are expressed (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011). The corollary is that food price stabilization measures and safety nets are critical instruments for preventing violent conflict.

In fragile states, a vicious cycle of instability can exist whereby food insecurity both results from and contributes to repeated rounds of armed conflict.

When national governance fails, as in the case of Somalia, conflict can lead to large-scale food insecurity or even famine. But the relationship can also go the other way. Over 60% of Somalia's population are pastoralists and semi-pastoralists who earn a living from livestock



husbandry. More frequent and intense droughts often lead to collapses in livestock prices, and thus contribute to the conditions that can cause food insecurity. A collapse in livestock prices reduces the incentives for being involved in “normal” animal husbandry activities. Therefore, they also reduce the opportunity cost of engaging in violent conflicts which are expected to bring higher income – and this makes the risks worth taking (IFPRI, 2014). In this way, food insecurity can result in more people entering a conflict and the vicious cycle continues. In order to reduce the risk of civil conflict in this context, it is necessary to increase the costs of participating in

conflicts for pastoralists and semi-pastoralists by fostering growth in the livestock sector, providing alternative income-earning opportunities, and establishing social safety nets (Maystadt and Ecker, 2014).

Another possible catalyst of wider inter-group conflict is competition to control natural resources such as land and water, required for food production. However, the causal relationship between natural resources, weak governance, conflict and poor development remains unclear, and points to the need for a deeper analysis of the particular elements and circumstances in which they are relevant.

Finally, there is growing evidence of a causal relationship between extreme weather events and the incidence of civil conflicts. This has proved to be valid for droughts and local violent conflicts in Somalia, and one study estimated that one standard deviation increase in the length and intensity of drought increases the likelihood of conflict by 62% (Maystadt and Ecker, 2014). The same study also found that drought affects conflict by causing changes in livestock prices, and suggests that drought-caused livestock price shocks are a main driver of local conflict. This has important implications for policies and investments in drought mitigation and resilience building for both climate change adaptation and conflict prevention.

However, Brinkman and Hendrix (2011) highlight contradictory evidence regarding causality. In some cases, weather conditions that reduce agricultural productivity – drought, floods and warmer temperatures – seem to lead to food insecurity and contribute to civil conflict. Young men find fighting a more attractive option than farm work if the latter produces low returns. Or poor households may voice their grievances against inadequate government responses to their poverty and hunger. In other cases, good agricultural weather conditions and high levels of agricultural productivity provide both incentives and opportunities to fuel, and engage in, conflict incited by other grievances (Simmons, 2013). In such contexts, improved agricultural conditions increase the availability of valuable assets worth plundering (grains, land, livestock, etc.).

FOOD SECURITY AND PEACE DIVIDENDS

It has been argued that, when implemented appropriately, well-timed interventions aimed at improving food security build resilience to conflict because they help countries and peoples to cope with and recover from conflict; they also contribute to preventing conflicts, while supporting economic development more broadly (IFPRI, 2014). Building resilience through peacebuilding efforts has been seen to play a critical role in supporting food security outcomes in areas with recurrent crises (Kurtz and McMahon, 2015).

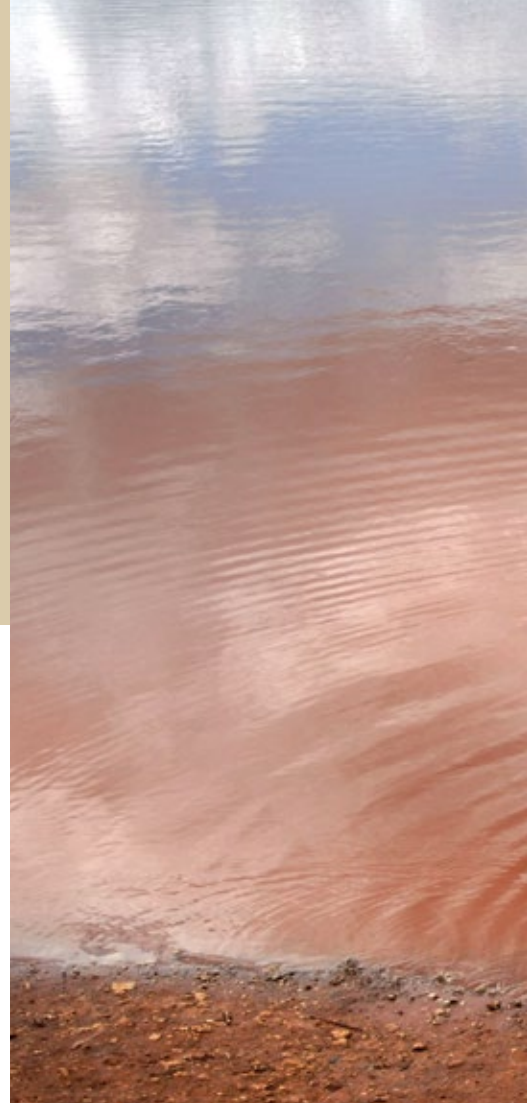
However, there is limited knowledge about the role of food security in preventing or mitigating conflicts and, potentially, in supporting peacebuilding processes. Based on a number of disparate findings in the literature, some potential mechanisms whereby food security may affect conflict (or peace) outcomes are posited. First, interventions to improve food security may help weaken some - but not all - of the welfare-

related motives that may lead individuals to become fighters or support armed groups. Second, greater food price stability and the recovery of local agricultural and food markets could help vulnerable individuals and households to overcome the adverse legacies of armed conflict by encouraging affected people to move beyond subsistence agriculture and rejoin exchange markets. They may also reduce the appeal of illegal activities. These effects depend largely on how the local institutional formation during wartime affected (either negatively or positively) the lives and livelihoods of populations living in these areas. More work is required to better understand these pathways, and acquire more systematic evidence.

Nonetheless, agriculture is the dominant form of livelihood for the majority of households in conflict-affected countries, and efforts to revive the agricultural sector, foster economic growth and increase food security may have positive effects on the sustainability

of peace. In the aftermath of a social shock, particularly in fragile settings, it is important to rapidly re-engage smallholder farmers - both men and women - in productive activities.

Food assistance can offer valuable peace dividends, as well as contributing to restoring trust in governments and rebuilding social capital (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011). Findings from a review of case studies and literature (Frankenberger, 2012) indicate that food-based livelihood assistance has the potential to directly



**KENYA**

A woman collecting drinking water from a polluted watering hole.
©FAO/Vitale

address some of the underlying causes of conflict in affected communities. It can do so by creating productive infrastructure, providing social protection, and improving the technical capacity of governments and other local counterparts. However, there are obviously substantial challenges to providing assistance strategically and effectively in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Broadly speaking, there are a number of food security related interventions and measures that governments and international

stakeholders can put in place to mitigate the risk of conflicts recurring, and the related impacts on food security. As noted above, preventative interventions that can break the link between food insecurity and conflict include mechanisms that shield consumers and producers from food price shocks, including food price stabilization measures and safety nets.

A different perspective, drawing on social anthropological approaches, is that in addition to restarting the economic engine to drive recovery,

agriculture brings new life to shattered homes and communities, and motivates people to come together when conflict has destroyed social networks. Limited research has demonstrated that it is possible to evaluate psychosocial impacts using, for example, a Sense of Coherence scale. One application of this approach to an FAO programme in the North Caucasus showed the multiple contributions of different types of agriculture programmes to the recovery process, including for social regeneration (Akhilgova, J., *et al.* 2013).

ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE AND PEACEBUILDING

The role and position of women is relevant to how conflicts affect food security and how food security can support peacebuilding. In most rural and agricultural settings, women are mainly responsible for food security and nutrition within the household. In many developing countries, they also supply the bulk of agricultural labour, although they usually find it harder than men to earn a living as farmers or agricultural workers because they often do not have the same rights as men to own or control land, buy inputs, obtain credit, or receive an education (for example, FAO, 2011; Lastarria-Cornheil, 2005). During civil strife and conflict, these constraints tend to be exacerbated because more men, who normally assume a number of responsibilities, are absent as they engage in conflict or flee in search of alternative livelihoods.

Experience and evidence show that women are more likely to spend their incomes on food, healthcare and education. Hence, they are critical for survival during conflict, as well as being the drivers in

post-conflict recovery (UN Women, 2012). Targeting women as the first beneficiaries of food aid and social protection, as well as helping them and their communities complete harvests, can therefore contribute significantly to improving household resilience and to peacebuilding. It is important to promote women's economic empowerment, their right to access and use resources as well as their participation in decision-making in natural resource management. Closing the gender gap in agriculture would generate significant gains for the agriculture sector and help build peaceful and inclusive societies.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) is a landmark framework that addresses not only the inordinate impact of conflict on women, but also the pivotal role women should, and do, play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. It aims to reinforce women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery processes, in both conflict and post-conflict situations. Subsequent resolutions

have highlighted the role of women as key actors in economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy. Notably, the UNSCR 2122 (2013) recognizes *"...that the economic empowerment of women greatly contributes to the stabilization of societies emerging from armed conflict"*.

**WOMEN ARE
MORE LIKELY TO
SPEND THEIR
INCOMES ON
FOOD,
HEALTHCARE AND
EDUCATION**

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RESOURCES

ONE HUMANITY, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

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

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



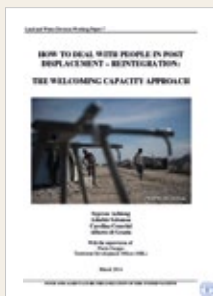
The growing number of people in crisis, the dramatic increase in

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

HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE IN POST DISPLACEMENT – REINTEGRATION

FAO Working Paper, 2014

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



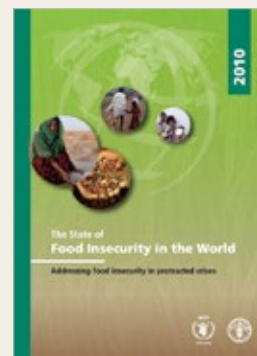
In conflict situations, peace settlements and cease-fire agreements may often end violent conflicts,

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

THE STATE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE WORLD

FAO, 2010

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



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

TOO IMPORTANT TO FAIL

Addressing the humanitarian financing gap

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

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



The world today spends around US\$ 25 billion to provide life-saving assistance to 125

million people devastated by wars and natural disasters. That's 12 times more than 15 years ago, but the generosity is far from sufficient. This expert report recognizes that addressing the root causes of humanitarian needs is the best way to shrink them and argues that as development is the best resilience-builder of all, funds for that should go where they matter most – situations of fragility – and that funds dedicated for peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the international level should be harnessed to systematic investment in resilience-building. It also suggests ways to expand the resource base for humanitarian assistance.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY: Risks and responses

FAO, 2016

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



This paper provides an overview of the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition and explores

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

FAO AND THE 17 SDGs

FAO, 2015

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

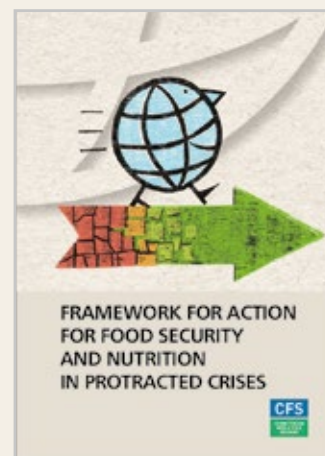


This booklet offers an overview of how FAO is well positioned to support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and shows how most of these are related to FAO's work.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN PROTRACTED CRISES

Committee on World Food Security (CFS), 2015

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1415/FFA/CFS_FFA_Final_Draft_Ver2_EN.pdf



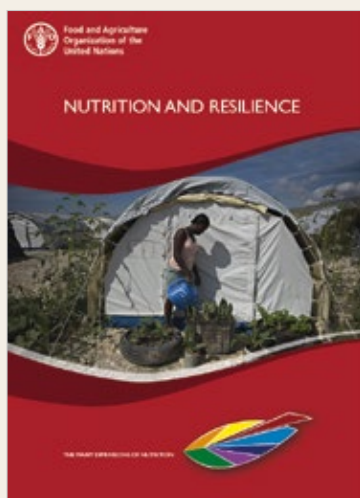
Eliminating hunger and undernutrition in protracted crisis situations requires special attention as responses differ from those in short-term crises or non-crisis development contexts, affirms this document, approved by the inclusive intergovernmental CFS. Each protracted crisis is different, but shared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

All FAO publications can be accessed at www.fao.org/publications

STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN NUTRITION AND RESILIENCE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

FAO, 2014

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3777e.pdf>



This discussion paper shows how growing attention to resilience represents an opportunity to engage in more effective nutrition programming and vice versa, an important need in humanitarian crises triggered

by conflict as well as natural disasters. It notes the importance of designing emergency programmes to make sure the needs of the most physiologically vulnerable people, particularly pregnant and lactating women and children less than five years old, are met.

PARTICIPATORY NEGOTIATED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

FAO Working Paper, 2009

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



FAO's PNTD, the product of years of experience and successfully tested in five continents, is a facilitative process striving for rural development through negotiating, participation and dialogue in the wake of conflict, one which considers socio-political aspects to be just as

important as technical and economic elements in the effort to eradicate poverty and hunger. Geared to land management and land tenure, this bottom-up approach entails FAO acting as a disinterested referee in negotiations designed to include vulnerable and marginal populations, build credibility between public and private actors and strengthen social cohesion, even on issues tangential to the process itself.



THE IMPACT OF DISASTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

FAO, 2015

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

Natural disasters worldwide in the decade from 2003 to 2013 cost

some \$1.5 trillion in economic damages, and their frequency and severity is rising. In this study, FAO shows that almost a quarter of the damage and losses caused by such disasters in developing countries fell on the agriculture sector, which is the main source of livelihoods and food security in those countries, as well as a key driver of economic growth. Governments must design measures specific to the crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry subsectors.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

An analysis of the complex relationship between 'peace and stability' and the achievement of development goals (Hong, 2015) shows that peace and stability are both the enablers for - and outcome of - development.

Reducing armed conflict and extreme poverty - and addressing their consequences - are key to ending hunger. Fostering economic development and greater equity within and between countries while strengthening good governance can help address the root causes of conflict (GHI, 2015). Policies and strategies that reduce development stresses and mitigate the risks of conflict simultaneously can be effective in restoring peace and stability and create a virtuous cycle between peace and sustainable development.

With improved data and data analyses on agricultural and non-agricultural incomes, conflict models might better predict how food insecurity related to crop failure or persistent low productivity could affect the incentives of rural households to be involved in conflicts. Micro-level analyses and case studies will be crucial to better understand these relationships.

It is also clear from the literature that a more in-depth study of the conflict, food security and peace nexus would provide a stronger basis for designing effective interventions. A more explicit integration of food security variables into theories of conflict could help inform external interventions aimed at mitigating food insecurity and preventing conflict.

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PEACE AND FOOD SECURITY

Investing in resilience to sustain rural livelihoods amid conflict



FAO has long been concerned about the impact of war on food security and on how hunger can be one of the drivers of instability and conflict but we also know that actions to promote food security can help prevent a crisis, mitigate its impacts and promote post-crisis recovery and healing.

This booklet explains the relationship between peace, conflict and food security and FAO's experience on the ground that shows how investing in food security helps fight hunger and builds peace.

Peace and food security are mutually reinforcing. We have often seen hunger recede when stability prevails, such as in post-conflict Angola and Nicaragua, post-genocide Rwanda and post-independence Timor-Leste. Similarly, however, violence and hunger are often locked in vicious cycles in which one feeds on the other. **Conflicts are a key driver of protracted crises, where the prevalence of undernourishment is three times higher than in the rest of the developing world.**

FAO plays a fundamental role both in raising the flag and in mobilising global and national responses

when conflicts impact food security, for example in 2011 in Somalia, and in Syria where FAO is working with partners to strengthen the food security and resilience of those that remain on their land, most of whom are women and children. FAO also works closely with UN peace-building efforts to reintegrate former combatants in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and the Philippines.

Ironically, most conflicts mainly affect those living in rural areas, where food is produced. **Agriculture accounts for two-thirds of employment and one-third of GDP in countries in protracted crises.** As a result, supporting agriculture - helping the most vulnerable through social protection and building-up their resilience, addressing issues of land tenure and access to natural resources, and creating employment opportunities for youth - can contribute effectively to peacebuilding.

FAO is working within the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that recognizes that peace is a vital condition for development by focusing on **eradicating hunger, poverty and malnutrition** to achieve peaceful societies that leave no one behind.