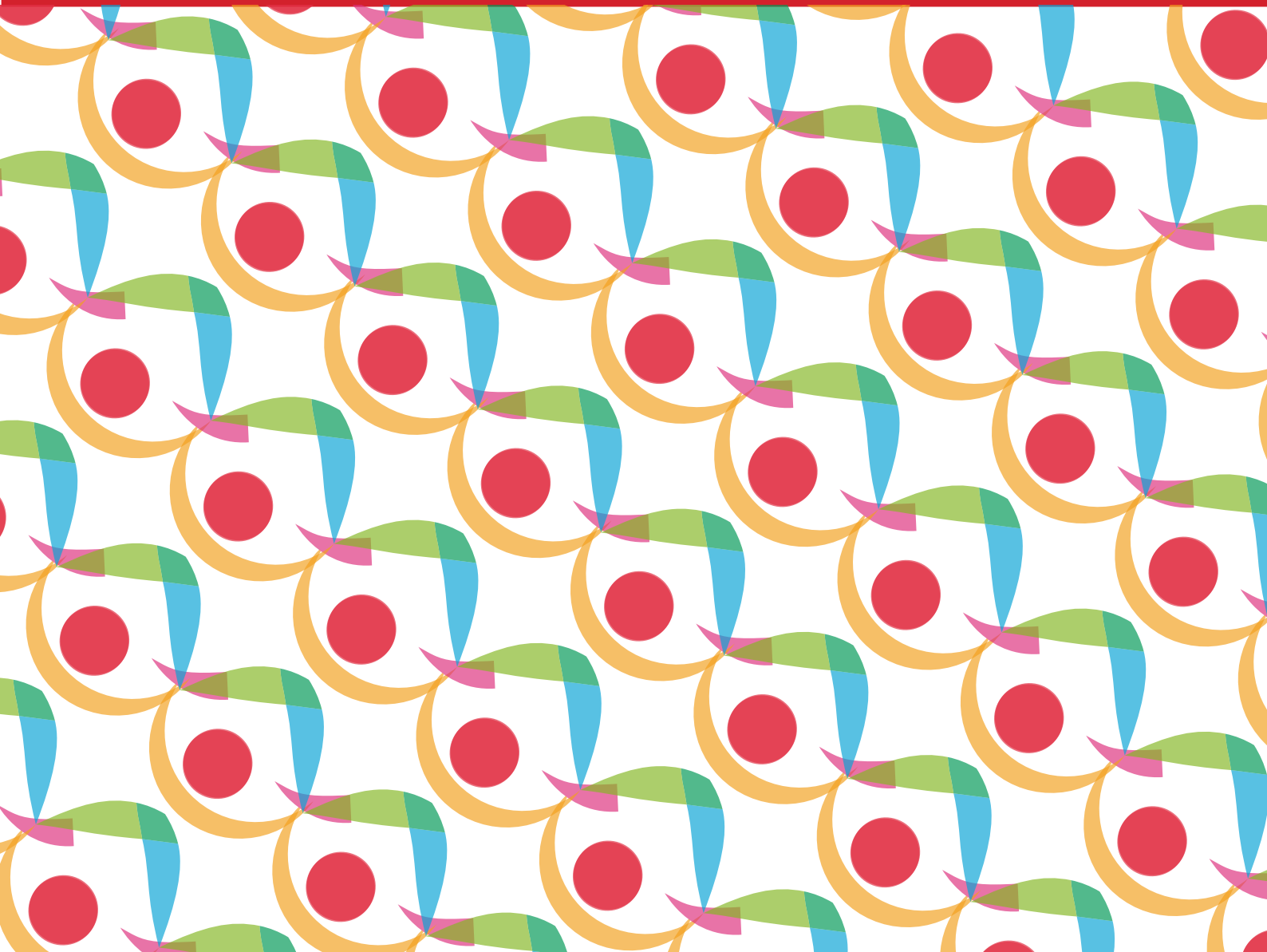




The Kids Voice

& Young Journalist Adventure



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Food Crisis

Millions of people across Africa are facing a tremendous food crisis. The number of dead is in permanent rise, countries become poorer day by day and conflicts arise. According to OXFAM in 2011 the food crisis was affecting 13 million of people in the East Africa.

In this edition we talk about the main food crisis of this century. At the first section we analyzed the basics concepts of hunger, famine and food crisis. Moreover, we discuss about hunger as an issue of justice and equity.

The international community responds to the famine in Africa in several ways: sending money, developing projects, training local people. In the second article we talk about the international cooperation and the African response to this harmful situation.

Finally we discuss the several causes of the famine and the current situation in Africa.

I hope this edition helps to realize the situation in Africa regarding food crisis and hunger and encourage people to start to help and contribute to eradicate this scourge.

Thank you.

Anabella Corridoni
Youth Magazine Coordinator



WHAT WE DO?

Providing Adolescents and Adults with Jobs for Advancement in the Future (PAAJAF) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that focuses on providing: Basic facilities (Food, shelter, clothing), Information (Healthcare, Community building, Job training) and Education for underprivileged children, youth and women. It is a registered NGO with a Certificate of Recognition from the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana – Certificate Number D.S.W./4003 and Register General G21, 781 have affiliation with United Way Ghana, GlobalGiving, Global Health Council and Gift In Kind International

Base on our vision and mission, we have the following current programs gear towards meeting our goals: **Sponsor a child, Education, Teen Centre, Adult Education, Children's Networking, Youth Journalism, Health and Wellness Education, and Exchange Program.**

For the year 2011, we are delighted to inform you that we will be carrying on PAAJAF projects and are depending 100% on your donations both cash, in-kind and partnership. PAAJAF urgently requires an office space to coordinate a team of local and international volunteers and to manage programs of the foundation; an amount of \$13,500 is needed. Having an office will enable PAAJAF to: enlist local volunteers in a professional setting, meet with and support program participants, have contact with a variety of stakeholders engaged in PAAJAF work, use ICT and other equipment for global networking, and maintain an effective filing and storage system also to work on this magazine to provide you more stuff.

To see more about the contents of our programs please visit. www.paaajaf.org

SPONSOR A CHILD PROGRAM

their basic needs – though inadequate. Therefore, use donations to support such needy families for the sake of the sponsored child.

WHAT IS SPONSORSHIP?

Sponsorship is a very personal way to share your blessings with an impoverished child. Through regular contributions, you'll help improve a needy child's life with basic necessities, such as health care, education assistance, durable clothing and shoes, improved living conditions and more. Additionally, you being a burden sharer, your help will give a needy child an emotional and mental comfort because he or she has known that someone cares for him or her elsewhere.

I'M READY TO SPONSOR A CHILD TODAY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Please, drop us email today, fill the form, write the name of the child you want to sponsor. An amount of \$1 per a day or \$30 per a month can bring life and hope to a needy child.

WHAT BENEFITS GO TO A SPONSORED CHILD?

Your sponsorship helps us provide a needy child with life's basic needs - education, health care, and nutritious food. PAAJAF steps further to do the following deductions from any fiscal contributions - 3% to General Fund for administration purposes and 2% for Educational infrastructure.

AM I THE ONLY SPONSOR FOR A NEEDY CHILD?

Most one-on-one sponsorship programs provide "supplementary care" for children living in poverty. However, the children being sponsored already have homes and families that are providing

IF ONE IS COMMITTED TO A PARTICULAR LEVEL OF SPONSORSHIP, CAN HE/SHE GIVE MORE SOME MONTHS?

Yes, the additional money will be designated for the foundation's general fund. (Unless you specify to a particular project). The support we receive through the child sponsorship program is typically insufficient to cover the complete monthly support of a child. We also use those funds to cover operational expenses.

HOW LONG WOULD A SPONSORSHIP LAST?

Normally, sponsored children are coming from a very poor family, and would otherwise not be able to attend school without a package. Sponsored children generally continue school till higher secondary. After that, they have a solid basic education, and can work to earn money for self. Some are very bright and can continue up to the University. If a needy child cannot continue his or her study, PAAJAF would inform the sponsoring parent(s) about it.

HOW ARE CHILDREN CHOSEN FOR SPONSORSHIP?

Members in the community help identify the most vulnerable children in the area. Then, PAAJAF takes up fact finding research to ascertain the truth or otherwise of the claim. It is only when a child's level of need is considered to be critical then he or she is recommended for sponsorship. Even here, the



the consent of the families is requested for approval before PAAJAF can take it up.

AS A CHILD SPONSOR, WHAT WILL I RECEIVE FROM PAAJAF?

When one becomes a child sponsor, one will receive a Welcome Package from PAAJAF - letter of introduction from the sponsored child by PAAJAF. Each year, a sponsor shall receive a report detailing the progress of the sponsored child and the community project in general. This report also includes an updated photograph of the sponsored child.

CAN I VISIT MY SPONSORED CHILD?

A visit to your sponsored child and their community is a rewarding way to see the benefits of your contributions. You must contact PAAJAF at least three months before your intended departure date and before you make any travel arrangements.

SHOULD I WRITE TO MY SPONSORED CHILD?

PAAJAF strongly encourages you to write to your sponsored child. Children love to hear from their sponsors and often treasure the letters and photos that are sent. Please note that while your letters may reach your sponsored child within a few weeks, the response time can be quite long (up to six months, in some cases). When writing to your sponsored child, use the PAAJAF's address.

All correspondence must include:

PAAJAF's postal address (exactly as it appears).

Your sponsored child's name

Please do not write your address inside the letter.

CAN I SEND GIFTS TO MY SPONSORED CHILD?

You are welcome to send simple gifts with your letters and cards. Please send only flat items such as photos, bookmarks, stamps or stickers in an envelope not bigger than "6x9". (Please do not send parcels or cash.)

WHAT IF I CANNOT MAKE MY CHILD SPONSORSHIP PAYMENTS?

Should you be unable to make regular child sponsorship payments, please contact PAAJAF as soon as possible to explore the range of options available.

WHAT IF I NEED TO DISCONTINUE MY SPONSORSHIP?

If we realize that your circumstances may change and that you may no longer be able to sponsor your child. Simple inform PAAJAF about your situation need to discontinue.

To see who need your sponsorship visit our website www.paajaf.org

FOOD FOR THOUGHT; THE HUNGER CRISIS

By Aditi Panda¹



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization

SOFI

State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012

IFAD

The International Fund for Agricultural Development

WFP

World Food Programme

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Researcher, counselor, journalist, wife and mother,
Bhubaneswar, India,

*Source-UNICEF, GRPS, Google Chrome

Introduction

Poverty and hunger are two very important global issues that are brainstormed at every international summits and conferences and still have to find an elucidation. These issues are an overarching theme having social, cultural, political, environmental dimensions. Correspondingly, efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger will involve progress in an array of interlinked areas, which include social integration, employment and decent work, environmental sustainability and demographic issues. The wide-ranging effort that is necessary to eradicate poverty in its many dimensions is synthesized in the United Nations development agenda and the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, and other outcomes that emanated from the conferences and summits.

There are 870 million undernourished people in the world today. That means one in eight people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. Hunger and malnutrition are in fact the number one risk to the health worldwide, actually greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Among the key causes of hunger are natural disasters, conflict, poverty, poor agricultural infrastructure and over-exploitation of the environment. As well as the obvious sort of hunger resulting from an empty stomach, there is also the hidden hunger of micronutrient deficiencies which make people susceptible to infectious diseases, impair physical and mental development, reduce their labour productivity and increase the risk of premature death. Hunger does not only weigh on the individual. It also imposes a crushing economic burden on the developing world. Economists estimate that every child whose physical and mental development is stunted by hunger and malnutrition stands to lose 5-10 percent in lifetime earnings

Hunger and Poverty Facts

- Despite years of progress against hunger, in 2010, it is estimated that 925 million people suffer from hunger. This is due to a sudden spike in global food prices and the onset of a world-wide economic crisis.
- In 2005, the latest year for which data is available, 1.4 billion people in developing countries lived in extreme poverty, or on less than \$1.25 a day, down from 1.9 billion in 1981. Regional disparities
- Poverty has declined dramatically in East Asia and in India since 1981 relative to population growth. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen little change in the proportion of people who live in extreme poverty between 1981 and 2005, with 51% of the population living on less than \$1.25 per day, down from 53% in 1981. The absolute number of people in extreme poverty has almost doubled during the same period, from 200 million in 1981 to almost 400 million in 2005.

- About 75% of the world's poor people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

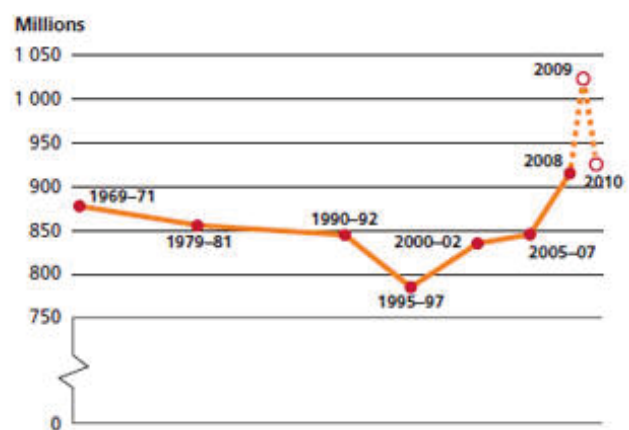
Malnutrition

- In 2008, nearly 9 million children died before they reached their fifth birthday. One third of these deaths are due directly or indirectly to hunger and malnutrition. Malnutrition is not having enough nourishing food, with adequate amounts of protein, vitamins, minerals and calories to support physical and mental growth and development. Children who survive early childhood malnutrition suffer irreversible harm-including poor physical growth, compromised immune function, and impaired cognitive ability.
- Around the world, 178 million children under 5 are stunted, low height for age. Of all stunted children, 90 percent live in just 36 countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Central Asia.
- In countries with high levels of childhood malnutrition, the economic loss can be as high as 2-3 percent of GDP.

The Current Situation

No one really knows how many people are malnourished. The statistic most frequently cited is that of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, which measures 'under nutrition'. The FAO did not publish an estimate in its most recent publication, 'The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2011' as it is undertaking a major revision of how it estimates food insecurity (FAO 2011 p. 10). The 2010 estimate, the most recent, says that 925 million people were undernourished in 2010 (FAO 2010).

As the figure below shows, the number of hungry people has increased since 1995-97. The increase has been due to three factors that are neglect of agriculture relevant to very poor people by governments and international agencies, the current worldwide economic crisis, and the significant increase of food prices in the last several years which have been devastating to those with only a few dollars a day to spend. 925 million people are 13.6% of the estimated world population of 6.8 billion. Nearly all of the undernourished are in developing countries



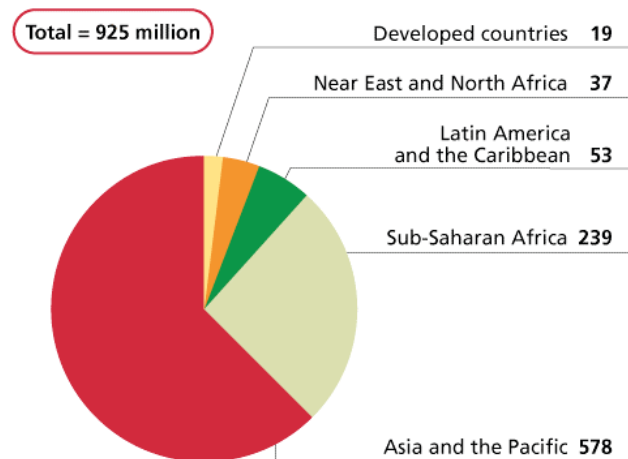
Source: FAO- Number of hungry people, 1969-2010



In round numbers there are 7 billion people in the world. Thus, with an estimated 925 million hungry people in the world, 13.1 percent, or almost 1 in 7 people are hungry. The FAO estimate is based on statistical aggregates. The FAO first estimates the total food supply of a country and derives the average per capita daily food intake from that. The distribution of average food intake for people in the country is then estimated from surveys measuring food expenditure. Using this information, and minimum food energy requirements, FAO estimates how many people are likely to receive such a low level of food intake that they are undernourished.

Under nutrition is a relatively new concept, but is increasingly used. It should be taken as similar to malnutrition. Children are the most visible victims of under nutrition. Children who are poorly nourished suffer up to 160 days of illness each year. Poor nutrition plays a role in at least half of the 10.9 million child deaths each year--five million deaths. Under nutrition magnifies the effect of every disease, including measles and malaria. The estimated proportions of deaths in which under nutrition is an underlying cause are roughly similar for diarrhea (61%), malaria (57%), pneumonia (52%), and measles (45%) (Black 2003, Bryce 2005). Malnutrition can also be caused by diseases, such as the diseases that cause diarrhea, by reducing the body's ability to convert food into usable nutrients.

According to the most recent estimate that Hunger Notes could find, malnutrition, as measured by stunting, affects 32.5 percent of children in developing countries--one of three (de Onis 2000). Geographically, more than 70 percent of malnourished children live in Asia, 26 percent in Africa and 4 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. In many cases, their plight began even before birth with a malnourished mother. Under-nutrition among pregnant women in developing countries leads to 1 out of 6 infants born with low birth weight. This is not only a risk factor for neonatal deaths, but also causes learning disabilities, mental, retardation, poor health, blindness and premature death.



Source: FAO- Number of hungry people, 1969-2010

It's a brutal truth and one has got to know the facts to actually believe it that when people are talking of techno-savvy and developing world so many billions are dying because they are hungry and are not getting food. Just spending huge amount on seminars and conferences and high level delegations to discuss this issue more efforts are needed to work at grass root levels where there is gross need of proactive interventions, proper resource allocation and implementation to decrease the huge death toll that is still happening due to poverty and hunger.

Causes of Hunger

If statistics indicate that Food has never before existed in such large quantity, so why are 870 million people in the world going hungry? (www.wfp.org/crisis/horn-of-africa)

In purely quantitative terms, there is enough food available to feed the entire global population of 7 billion people. And yet, one out of every eight people is going hungry. One in three children is underweight. Why does hunger exist?

Nature

Natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and long periods of drought are on the increase -- with calamitous consequences for food security in poor, developing countries.

Drought is now the single most common cause of food shortages in the world. In 2006, recurrent drought caused crop failures and heavy livestock losses in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. In many countries, climate change is exacerbating already adverse natural conditions. For example, poor farmers in Ethiopia or Guatemala traditionally deal with rain failure by selling off livestock to cover their losses and pay for food. But successive years of drought, increasingly common in the Horn of Africa and Central America, are exhausting their resources.

War

Since 1992, the proportion of short and long-term food crises that can be attributed to human causes has more than doubled, rising from 15 percent to more than 35 percent. All too often, these emergencies are triggered by conflicts.

From Asia to Africa to Latin America, fighting displaces millions of people from their homes, leading to some of the world's worst hunger emergencies. Since 2004, conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan has uprooted more than a million people, precipitating a major food crisis -- in an area that had generally enjoyed good rains and crops. In war, food sometimes becomes a weapon. Soldiers will starve opponents into submission by seizing or destroying food and livestock and systematically wrecking local markets. Fields and water wells are often mined or contaminated, forcing farmers to abandon their land.

When conflict threw Central Africa into confusion in the 1990s, the proportion of hungry people rose from 53 percent to 58 percent. By comparison, malnutrition is on the retreat in more peaceful parts of Africa such as Ghana and Malawi.

Poverty Trap

In developing countries, farmers often cannot afford seed to plant

the crops that would provide for their families. Craftsmen lack the means to pay for the tools to ply their trade. Others have no land or water or education to lay the foundations for a secure future.

The poverty-stricken do not have enough money to buy or produce enough food for themselves and their families. In turn, they tend to be weaker and cannot produce enough to buy more food. In short, the poor are hungry and their hunger traps them in poverty.

Agricultural infrastructure

In the long-term, improved agricultural output offers the quickest fix for poverty and hunger. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2004 Food Insecurity Report, all the countries that are on track to reach the first Millennium Development Goal have something in common -- significantly better than average agricultural growth.

Yet too many developing countries lack key agricultural infrastructure, such as enough roads, warehouses and irrigation. The results are high transport costs, lack of storage facilities and unreliable water supplies. All conspire to limit agricultural yields and access to food. But, although the majority of developing countries depend on agriculture, their governments economic planning often emphasises urban development.

Over-exploitation of environment

Poor farming practices, deforestation, over cropping and overgrazing are exhausting the Earth's fertility and spreading the roots of hunger. Increasingly, the world's fertile farmland is under threat from erosion and desertification.

Conclusion

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012 (SOFI), jointly published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), presents better estimates of chronic undernourishment based on an improved methodology and data for the last two decades. The vast majority of the hungry, 852 million live in developing countries -- around 15 percent of their population -- while 16 million people are undernourished in developed countries.

The global number of hungry people declined by 132 million between 1990-92 and 2010-12, or from 18.6 percent to 12.5 percent of the world's population, and from 23.2 percent to 14.9 percent in developing countries - putting the MDG target within reach if adequate, appropriate actions are taken.

The number of hungry declined more sharply between 1990 and 2007 than previously believed. Since 2007-2008, however, global progress in reducing hunger has slowed and leveled off. It is necessary to work with the aim to recover the world economy from the recent global financial crisis that is fragile. The international community has made a plea to make extra efforts to assist

the poorest in realizing their basic human right to adequate food. The world has the knowledge and the means to eliminate all forms of food insecurity and malnutrition "twin-track" approach is needed, based on support for broad-based economic growth (including in agriculture) and safety nets for the most vulnerable. SOFI 2012 notes that the methodology does not capture the short-term effects of food price surges and other economic shocks. FAO is also working to develop a wider set of indicators to better capture dietary quality and other dimensions of food security.

Agricultural growth is particularly effective in reducing hunger and malnutrition in poor countries since most of the poor depend on agriculture and related activities for at least part of their livelihoods. Agricultural growth involving smallholders, especially women, will be most effective in reducing extreme poverty and hunger when it generates employment for the poor.

Growth must not only benefit the poor, but must also be "nutrition-sensitive" in order to reduce various forms of malnutrition. Reducing hunger is about more than just increasing the quantity of food it is also about increasing the quality of food in terms of diversity, nutrient content and safety.

For even while 870 million people remain hungry, the world is increasingly faced with a double burden of malnutrition, with chronic undernourishment and micronutrient malnutrition co-existing with obesity, overweight and related non-communicable diseases (affecting more than 1.4 billion people worldwide).



HUNGER IS NOT AN ISSUE OF CHARITY. IT IS AN ISSUE OF JUSTICE

By Mahua Maharana¹



¹Mahua attained her Masters in Modern History and Diploma in Social Service and Community Service. She worked as an insurance professional for 22 years and is a Life Associate of the Insurance Institute of India. Mahua now enjoys her retired life doing what she always wanted to, like embroidery, tending her potted plants, attending concerts, translating, writing and reading and is involved with voluntary activities. She is 53 and lives in Bhubaneswar, India with her husband, daughter and dog.

What is the reality? Consider the following:

- They are eating mud in Haiti.
- A little oil and a little sugar mixed with dirt has become the meal of last resort for many who can no longer afford to purchase real food.
- As the prices of staples sky-rocket across the globe hunger worsens for millions throughout the world and push families closer to the brink,
- Riots erupt due to food crisis in countries where marginalized people were already struggling to survive.
- The escalating cost of food also threatens to turn back hard won progress against extreme poverty in the world
- 100 million people pushed back into the ranks of the very poor.
- Young children, who need adequate nutrition to sustain their physical and cognitive development, are the most vulnerable.

Hunger — concepts, ideas and definitions

Hunger as per Oxford English Dictionary (1971) has three meanings:

- the uneasy or painful sensation and exhausted conditions caused by want of food
- the want or scarcity of food in a country
- a strong desire or craving

However, when politicians, relief workers and social scientists talk about people suffering from hunger, they usually refer to those who are unable to eat sufficient food to meet their basic nutritional needs for a sustained period of time.

World hunger refers to the second definition, aggregated to the world level.

Malnutrition is a general term that indicates a lack of some or all nutritional elements necessary for human health. Malnutrition is of two types: protein-energy malnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiency. Protein-energy malnutrition is referred to when world hunger is discussed.

Undernutrition should be taken as similar to malnutrition.

Famine is a widespread scarcity of food that may apply to any fauna species; the phenomenon is usually accompanied by regional malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality.

Starvation describes a "state of exhaustion of the body caused by lack of food." This state may precede death.

What are the causes of hunger?

What are the causes of hunger is a fundamental question, with varied answers.

- Poverty is the principal cause of hunger. The causes of poverty include poor people's lack of resources, an extremely unequal income distribution in the world and within specific countries, conflict, and hunger itself. As per statistics of 2005, the World Bank (WB) has estimated that there were an estimated 1,345 million poor people in developing countries who live on \$1.25 a day or less. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates 1.02 billion undernourished people. Despite some progress concentrated in Asia, extreme poverty remains an alarming problem in the developing regions of the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people in extreme poverty has increased. The statement that 'poverty is the principal cause of hunger' is, though correct, unsatisfying.

- Harmful economic systems, faulty agriculture policies are the principal cause of poverty and hunger. In fact, Amartya Sen won his 1998 Nobel Prize in part for his work in demonstrating that hunger in modern times was not typically the product of a lack of food; rather, hunger usually arose from problems in food distribution networks or from governmental policies in the developing world.

- Conflict is a cause of hunger and poverty. The recent years have witnessed a significant increase in refugee numbers, due primarily to the violence taking place in Iraq and Somalia. By the end of 2008, the total number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate exceeded 10 million. The number of conflict-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) reached some 26 million worldwide at the end of the year. Providing exact figures on the number of stateless people is extremely difficult but that it contributes to poverty and the resultant hunger is unquestionable.

- Hunger is also a cause of poverty, and thus of hunger. By causing poor health, low levels of energy, and even mental impairment, hunger can lead to even greater poverty by reducing people's ability to work and learn, thus leading to even greater hunger.

- Climate change is increasingly viewed as a current and future cause of hunger and poverty. Increasing drought, flooding, and changing climatic patterns requiring a shift in crops and farming practices that may not be easily accomplished are key issues.

How severe is the problem of Hunger?

Throughout history, a large proportion of the world's population has often experienced sustained periods of hunger. In many cases this resulted from disruptions to the food supply caused by war, plagues or adverse weather changes. While progress towards reducing hunger had been uneven, by 2000 the threat of extreme hunger had subsided for a great many of the world's people. As there has been a sharp rise of people suffering from hunger in 2007-08 it is unlikely the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of the United Nations to achieve a further 50% reduction in the number of people suffering from extreme hunger by 2015 is



is unlikely to be achieved. Overall, the world is not making progress toward the world food summit goal, although there has been progress in Asia, and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Until 2006, the average international price of food had been largely stable for several decades. But in the closing months of 2006 it began to rise at a rapid rate. By 2008 the price of rice had more than tripled in some regions, which had an especially severe impact in developing countries. The 2008 worldwide financial crisis further increased the number of people suffering from hunger, including dramatic increases even in advanced economies such as Great Britain, the Eurozone and the United States. By mid-2012, about one billion people were suffering from chronic hunger, which is an increase of close to 200 million since the beginning of the century. According to the United Nations' World Food Programme, a child dies from hunger every six seconds.

Approximately there were 925 million hungry people in 2010
Number of hungry people, 1969-2010

Source: FAO

No one really knows how many people are malnourished. The statistic most frequently cited is that of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, which measures 'under nutrition'. Children are the most visible victims of undernutrition, as undernourished children suffer up to 160 days of illness each year. Poor nutrition plays a role in at least half of the 10.9 million child deaths each year—five million deaths. While undernutrition magnifies the effect of every disease, it can also be caused by diseases by reducing the body's ability to convert food into usable nutrients.

The 2010 estimate, the most recent, says that 925 million people were undernourished in 2010. As the figure shows, the number of hungry people has increased since 1995-97. The increase has been due to three factors:

- neglect of agriculture relevant to very poor people by governments and international agencies;
- the current worldwide economic crisis, and
- the significant increase of food prices in the last several years which have been devastating to those with only a few dollars a day to spend.

Geographically, more than 70 percent of malnourished children live in Asia, 26 percent in Africa and 4 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. Under-nutrition among pregnant women in developing countries leads to 1 out of 6 infants born with low birth weight. This is not only a risk factor for neonatal deaths, but also causes learning disabilities, mental, retardation, poor health, blindness and premature death.

According to the FAO, 850 million people worldwide were undernourished in 1999 to 2005 and the number of hungry people has recently been increasing widely. In 2007 and 2008, rapidly increasing food prices caused a global food crisis, increasing the numbers suffering from hunger by over a hundred million. Food riots erupted in several dozen countries; in at least two cases, Haiti and Madagascar, this led to governments being toppled. A second global food crisis occurred due to the spike in

food prices of late 2010 and early 2011. Less food riots occurred due in part to greater stock piles of food being available for relief.

In round numbers there are 7 billion people in the world. Thus, with an estimated 925 million hungry people in the world, 13.1 percent, or almost 1 in 7 people are hungry. On October 11, 2010, it was reported that the number of malnourished people in the world exceeded 1 billion people about a sixth of the world's total population. Six million children die of starvation every year. World Food Programme (WFP) statistics presented through TeleSUR on 11 January 2012 indicated that approximately every 6 seconds one kid dies of hunger. This notwithstanding the fact that the FAO purports that the world already produces enough food to feed everyone — 6 billion people — and could feed double — 12 billion people.

Africa

This year Africa's Sahel region has been hit with a massive food crisis. Already, some 18 million people in the region are confronting a severe food shortage. The hunger crisis is most immediately tied to inadequate rainfall, small crop yields, and high food prices, but conflict makes the situation all the more severe. A recent primer from the WFP draws attention to the precarious food situations in eight Sahel countries. In Gambia, crop production has declined by more than 60 percent since 2010. An estimated 3.5 million people face hunger in Chad, and that country's remoteness makes aid distribution especially challenging. Ongoing conflict in Mali, where 1.7 million people face hunger, has forced 320,000 people to flee their homes. Tens of thousands of them are now taking refuge in other food insecure countries. The WFP's work there faces disruption, as does the work of other NGOs and international organizations. Many clinics and schools have been destroyed and the influx of Malian refugees to other countries has exacerbated regional food insecurity, not only because of the extra people to feed but also because some Malian refugees bring their livestock with them. In a potentially grave turn of events, the political situation also threatens to aggravate the spread of crop-eating locusts in Mali. Restoring stability in Mali is an enormous political and military task.

As for the rest of the Sahel, the usual questions about how to lessen the effects of a famine and prevent future food crises remain. One obvious measure is to source more food aid from within Africa itself. This would not only boost African economies, but also reduce transportation time and costs. In Niger, for instance, a local factory provides much of the country's emergency food aid. The factory in Niger also ships its products to other West African countries.

But the politics of hunger is complicated and large aids (by the agencies in the USA) are controlled by the US, where the Congress demand that USAID follow a "buy American" tied aid policy, meaning that the food it donates must come from the United States. Some are calling for change in the policy for the sake of humanitarian relief and for Africa's long-term development. In February, USAID made an important first step to ending its "buy American" tied aid policy when it lifted this restriction on other types of foreign assistance (food, motor vehicles, and US-patented pharmaceuticals excluded). Ending tied aid is by no means a panacea, but it could be an important step in

the right direction for aid reform.

While the ongoing food crisis in the Sahel is severe, almost 250,000 children there die from malnutrition each year, even under normal conditions. Of course, the term "normal conditions" hardly seems fitting for a region where drought has left millions of people food insecure at least three times in the past decade. This definitely needs longer-term solutions to the Sahel's failing agriculture. The short-term need for increased food aid to the Sahel is also enormous.

Politics of hunger

After World War II, a new international politico-economic order came into being, which was later described as Embedded liberalism. For at least the first decade after the war, the United States, by far the period's most dominant national actor, was strongly supportive of efforts to tackle world hunger and to promote international development. It heavily funded the United Nation's development programmes, and later the efforts of other multilateral organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WB. Once the reconstruction of the aftermath of the war was successfully done they diverted their attention to the developing nations.

A great many civil society actors were also active in trying to combat hunger, especially after the late 1970s when global media began to bring the plight of starving people in places like Ethiopia to wider attention. Most significant of all, especially in the late 1960s and 70s, there was the Green revolution which saw improved agricultural technology propagated throughout the world.

The United States began to change its approach to the problem of world hunger from about the mid 1950s. Influential members of the administration became less enthusiastic about methods which they saw as promoting an over reliance on the state, as they feared that might assist the spread of communism. By the 1980s, the previous consensus in favour of moderate government intervention had been displaced across the western world. The IMF and WB in particular began promoting market based solutions; in cases where countries became dependent on their finance, they sometimes forced national governments to prioritise debt repayments, and to sharply cut public services which sometimes had a negative effect on efforts to combat hunger. Organizations such as Food First raised the issue of food sovereignty and claimed that every country on earth (with the possible minor exceptions of some city-states) has sufficient agricultural capacity to feed its own people, but that the "free trade" economic order, which from the late 1970s to about 2008 had been associated with such institutions as the IMF and WB, had prevented this from happening. The WB itself had claimed to be part of the solution to hunger, asserting that the best way for countries to succeed in breaking the cycle of poverty and hunger was to build export-led economies that will give them the financial means to buy foodstuffs on the world market. However, in the early 21st century the WB and IMF became less dogmatic about promoting free market reforms. They increasingly returned to the view that government intervention does have a role to play, and that it can be advisable for governments to support food security with policies favourable to domestic agriculture, even for countries that don't have a Comparative advantage in that area. As of 2012, the WB remains active in helping governments to intervene against hunger.

Efforts to alleviate food crisis

Throughout history, the need to aid those suffering from hunger has been commonly, though not universally, recognised. The philosopher Simone Weil has written that feeding the hungry when you have resources to do so is the most obvious of all human obligations and human civilization as far back as Ancient Egypt believed that people needed to show they had helped the hungry in order to justify themselves in the afterlife. Weil writes that Social progress is commonly held to be first of all "a transition to a state of human society in which people will not suffer from hunger." Social historian Karl Polanyi wrote that before market economy became all-dominant most human societies would either starve all together or not at all, because communities would invariably share their food.

After World War II, the newly established United Nations became a leading player in co-coordinating the global fight against hunger. The UN has three agencies that work to promote food security and agricultural development:

- FAO, the world's agricultural knowledge agency, providing policy and technical assistance to developing countries to promote food security, nutrition and sustainable agricultural production, particularly in rural areas.
- WFP, the key mission of which is to deliver food into the hands of the hungry poor. The agency steps in during emergencies and uses food to aid recovery after emergencies. Its longer term approaches to hunger help the transition from recovery to development.
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), with its knowledge of rural poverty and exclusive focus on poor rural people, designs and implements programmes to help those people access the assets, services and opportunities they need to overcome poverty.

In 2002, the WB began a study involving 61 countries and more than 400 agricultural scientists. In 2008 they released a report called the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development. It contained ideas about how to feed the world, fight poverty and address climate change. According to the report, small-scale, diverse, sustainable farms and home gardens had the most potential to solve the world's hunger problems while reversing modern agriculture's devastation of ecosystems.

Efforts against hunger were mainly undertaken by the governments of the worst affected countries, by civil society actors, and by the multilateral and regional organisations. There was relatively little awareness of hunger from the leaders of advanced nations such as those who form the G8. In 2009, His Holy Father Pope Benedict published his third encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, which emphasised the importance of fighting against hunger and published immediately before the July 2009 G8 Summit, in order to maximise its influence on that event. At the Summit, which took place at L'Aquila in central Italy, the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative was launched; with a total of US\$22 billion was committed to combat hunger. In 2009 and early 2010, food prices did fall sharply, though analysts credit this much more to farmers increasing production in response to the 2008 spike in prices, rather than to the fruits of enhanced government action. However, ever since the 2009 G8 summit, the

fight against hunger has remained a high profile issue among the leaders of the world's major nations, and was a prominent part of the agenda for the 2012 G-20 summit. The 2012 Copenhagen Consensus recommended that efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition ought to be the No. 1 priority for politicians and private sector philanthropists looking to maximize the effectiveness of their spending on aid. This was ahead of other priorities like the fight against malaria and AIDs.

In May 2012, U.S. President Barack Obama launched the "new alliance for food security and nutrition", a broad partnership between private sector, governmental and civil society actors, which aimed to "achieve sustained and inclusive agricultural growth and raise 50 million people out of poverty over the next 10 years". Great Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron held a hunger summit on 12 August, the last day of the 2012 Summer Olympics. The fight against hunger has also been joined by an increased number of regular people.

By July 2012, the 2012 US drought had already caused a rapid increase in the price of grain and soy, with a knock on effect on the price of meat. As well as affecting hungry people in the US, this has caused prices to rise on the global markets as the US is the world's biggest exporter of food. There has been much talk that this may cause the 21st century's third global food crisis. Smaller developing countries which need to import a substantial portion of their food could be hard hit. The UN and G20 have begun contingency planning so as to be ready to intervene if a third global crisis does break out.

Intergovernmental actions against Food crisis

The Food Crisis was put high on the international agenda in 2007/2008. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon himself established and chaired the so-called High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on the Global Food Crisis in April 2008, bringing together the UN system with its specialised agencies, funds and programmes and the Bretton-Woods Institutions, in order to develop a common strategy to combat the crisis and to coordinate this strategy's implementation. Other participants were the representatives of the IFAD, the WFP, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLS), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The World Health Organisation (WHO), the IMF, the WB and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) also took part. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as well as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was only invited at a later point.

The short and long term actions to combat the crisis were identified by the HLTF which drafted the so-called Comprehensive Framework of Action (CFA). The proposed measures are overlapping and to be put into practice urgently and simultaneously.

- In order to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, the HLTF recommends four main emphases, to:
- enhance emergency food assistance, nutrition interventions and safety nets
- boost smallholder farmer food production,
- adjust trade and tax policies and
- manage macroeconomic implications.
- The second set of proposed actions aims to build resilience and contribute to global food and nutrition security. It also has four main foci;
- further expand of social protection systems
- sustain smallholder farmer-led food availability growth
- improve international food markets
- develop an international consensus on biofuels.

In response to the hike of food and fuel prices, the FAO launched its Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP) in 2007. The Initiative follows a 'twin-track approach', promoting quick response measures for agricultural growth as well as longer-term programmes. It works together closely with the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an African initiative to eradicate poverty, advance development and end marginalisation. The FAO appealed to governments to provide \$1.7 billion as rapid response for short-term measures to be implemented by the end of 2009. Between June 2008 and September 2009, it received an additional \$311 million in funding and mobilised less than \$37 million of its own resources. The money is used to assist governments in emergency measures, in efforts to increase local production in the current planting season as well as to expand plantings in the dry season, and to support governments with policy advice. Most activities are channeled through country governments themselves, either for budgetary support or direct investment. One third of the funding has gone into emergency Technical Cooperation Projects (TCP), helping 370,000 smallholder farmer households.

The WB, composed of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA), provides financial and technical assistance to developing countries. It is part of the WB Group, which also includes the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and two other agencies. In response to the Food Crisis, WB President Robert Zoellick has repeatedly called upon governments to embrace a New Deal for a Global Food Policy, which has been adopted by the WB development committee, the IMF and about 150 member states. This policy should not only focus on the eradication of hunger, but include different issues relating to energy, climate change, investment and others. According to Zoellick, the New Deal "requires a shift from traditional food aid to a broader concept of food and nutrition assistance, such as cash or vouchers that can help build local food markets and farm production, and create a 'Green Revolution' for Sub-Saharan Africa". The three main pillars are the expansion of safety nets, production increase, and the reduction of trade distorting subsidies and barriers, combined with a better understanding of the impact of biofuels. In the framework of this initiative, Zoellick appealed to governments to start by donating an additional \$500 million to the WFP. Within the New Deal, the WB set up a Global Food Crisis Response Programme (GFRP) in 2008 to grant immediate relief to those countries that were hit particularly hard by high food prices and to assist countries to bear the burden of higher production and marketing costs. It announced a rapid financing facility of \$1.2 billion, to be funded mainly by the IDA



(\$1 billion) and co-financed by the IBRD in the form of grants (\$200 million). The budget was increased to \$2 billion in April 2009. By September 2nd, 2009, \$1.164 billion was approved for different projects out of a proposed \$1.190, 4 billion under the GFRP, with another four projects worth \$26.4 million in the pipeline. The various measures are implemented through the Vulnerability Financing Facility (VFF). The maintenance of long-term infrastructure investments is addressed by the Infrastructure Recovery and Asset platform (INFRA), on which loans for long-term infrastructure investment programmes are granted. The WB announced it would raise its annual lending from \$10 to \$15 billion for the next three years. Particular emphasis is supposed to be put on 'green' investments. The WB also focuses on the role of the private sector. The IFC-led private sector platform, the Infrastructure Crisis Facility (ICF) attempts to attract public-private partnerships in order fill financial investment gaps. The platform is to sustain the potential for private sector-led economic growth and employment creation, i.e. through Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and microfinance. On top of the approximately \$300 million investment of own funds, the IFC tries to mobilize additional private funding for infrastructure projects and expects an additional \$2 billion. In June 2009, these platforms have been expanded by an Agriculture Finance Support Facility following a \$20 million contribution by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation. The GFRP is supported by three Externally-Funded Trust Funds valued at about \$200 million.

Other components of the New Deal further include the 'One Percent Solution', an initiative under which sovereign wealth funds are supposed to channel 1% of their \$3 trillion in investment potential to Sub-Saharan countries, as well as the EITI++ initiative, which is supposed to help countries manage their natural resources and transform their resource wealth into long-term economic growth. The WB announced in 2009 to provide \$45 billion over the next 3 years, compared to \$30 billion in the last 3 years.

European Union (EU)

The European Commission (EC), representing the 27 European Union (EU) Member States, passed a regulation pledging an additional one billion Euro (about \$1.4 billion) to fight hunger and counter the crisis (2008). The money, promised in December 2008, is to be paid into the newly created Rapid Response Food Facility (RRFF) and supposed to be spent over the next three years. 91% of the resources are to finance country-level projects, 6% for regional projects, 1.3% are to be put aside as reserve and 2% for administration. Almost half of the funds (\$550 million) are to be channelled through international organizations (FAO, UNRWA, UNICEF, WFP, IFAD, WB, UNDP and UNOPS), \$200 million are eligible for non-state actors like NGOs and Member States bodies and another \$170 million are supposed to be spent on national projects and programmes such as budget support measures. The EC has allocated the first \$313.9 million out of this fund by March 2009 and approved projects in 23 countries. \$48.5 million have been spent on four projects under the EU Food Facility Trust Fund through the WB, while another \$62.3 have been pledged for an additional six projects.

The main objectives of the Facility are to increase global food production, to improve handling of volatile food prices and their effects on local populations and to achieve long-term improvement of agricultural production and management.

Is Food Aid Back on Track?

The first Food Aid programmes began in the early 50s when agricultural policies of price support for commodities generated the oversupply of cereals – first in the US and Canada, then also in Europe. In order to support domestic farmers and agribusiness, to reduce storage costs and to access new markets, governments started shipping the surpluses to friendly or strategically positioned countries to ensure their support in the cold war. The correlation of food prices to donations (food prices up => donations down) suggests that food aid was mainly used as a foreign-policy instrument and domestic agricultural support rather than for humanitarian aid. Even today, agricultural interest groups as well as the shipping industry lobby for and benefit from food aid through in-kind donations that are transported to developing countries.

In the last two decades, food aid underwent important changes. At least multilaterally, the focus of food aid shifted from strategically important countries to LDC and LIFDC and the share of locally procured or triangularly purchased (meaning purchased in other developing countries) food aid increased. Although this represents a step into the right direction, it is still benefitting large-scale commercial farmers, and thus international corporations much more than local populations. In order to ensure food security and help small farmers, food aid must be procured from smallholder farmers, which usually lack transport and marketing infrastructures, face limited supply-chain consolidation and cannot fulfill phytosanitary norms and packaging requirements. Only when these barriers are overcome can local procurement boost local agriculture and trade, eventually bolstering development and providing an environmentally friendlier, more sustainable and more cost- and time-efficient form of food aid. According to the OECD, tied in-kind food-aid is on average 50% more expensive than locally purchased food and 30% more than triangular purchases.

Throughout the last years, there have also been indications of a slight trend away from direct food aid and towards food assistance in the form of cash or vouchers in non-crisis situations. This could be a more sustainable solution to prevent dependency on imports and encourage local production. However, it is too early to speak of a paradigm shift here, as most bilateral aid is still shipped in and distributed directly. The US, the biggest donor of food aid, is probably most notable in these aspects. In 2007, former President Bush proposed to allocate \$300 million of the \$1.3 billion annual food aid budget for local procurement rather than in-kind donations to be shipped abroad. Congress, however, accepted only a \$25 million pilot project. Due to increased pressure by the agriculture and shipping lobby, even this was eventually denied. Hence, US food aid remains the most expensive in the world. Half of its annual food aid budget goes towards fuel, shipping and domestic processing – increasing further with rising gas prices - and raising the cost of many American food items by over 100% compared to local purchase, profiting multinational companies more than hungering populations.

Despite some positive changes, food aid is still often regarded as too donor-oriented, politicized and steered by national and private interests.

A good example is the case of Zambia, which refused the import of genetically modified food aid from the US through the WFP. When it remained firm in its decision despite immense pressure by WFP and US government officials, other donations were also reduced. The WFP and the donor government consciously ignored their regulations regarding the recognition of recipient countries' own standards.

The political nature of food aid can be exemplified in Afghanistan, where food aid was drastically reduced from 552,000 to 230,000 tons of food between 2002 and 2003, once the country was no longer number one on the international agenda – despite the unchanged poverty and hunger many Afghans faced.

Despite the stark increase in the number of hungry people in the last couple of years, global food aid deliveries have been declining since 1999, reaching their lowest level in over half a century in 2007. 2007 food aid amounted to 6 million tons and was little more than half of 2003, when 10.2 million tons were distributed among hungry people. Due to higher food and fuel prices, food aid has also become much more expensive.

Despite the record number of hungry people in 2008, global food aid increased by only 3.8%, totaling 6.3 million tons.

Programmes

The WFP has become a major player in development aid and virtually a “monopolist” in food aid, channeling 97% of multilateral food aid and almost two thirds of total food aid. 93% of total aid is donated to LIFDC and 70.3% to LDC. The five biggest donor countries, the US, the EC, Japan, Canada and Saudi Arabia, accounted for 72% of overall deliveries, although the EC's donations declined by 77%. While food aid has traditionally been provided in the form of in-kind donations like wheat, corn or milk powder, this approach has been widely criticised and some donor countries have undergone a shift towards more financial/cash donations to encourage local procurement.

In 2008, the WFP received 61% of its contributions in cash and 39% in-kind. The overall spending in 2008 totaled \$3.5 billion, including an emergency package financing projects in 16 “hunger hotspots” with food assistance and safety nets worth \$214 million, and a \$1.2 billion cash package for 62 countries. According to the WFP, an additional 30 million people were fed. In total, 102 million hungry people in 78 countries received 3.9 million tons of food, compared to 3.3 million in 2007. In addition to food aid and assistance delivery, the WFP has conducted research on the operation and performance of national (public) food reserves.

While its food aid programmes (as well as the entire concept of food aid) have been sharply criticised by researchers/NGOs, it should be recognized that the WFP is slowly undergoing a strategic shift away from mere food aid delivery and towards more food assistance.

The FAO has been calling for a food aid-reform for years. In its State of Food and Agriculture Report from 2006, it criticised that tying food aid results in roughly a third of the global food aid budget, or some US\$600 million, being spent in donor countries and never reaching beneficiaries, calling for cash aid in order not to disrupt local markets and undermine the resilience of local food

systems. The WB contributed \$11 million to the WFP in 2008 partly through the WFP and partly through other organisations or on its own, it spent an estimated total of \$27 million on school feeding programmes. It further supported projects funding nutrition supplements, cash transfers and food for work programmes under the GFRP.

The IFAD is not directly involved in food aid, as it has a rather different focus in its work. It does, however, work closely with the WFP and the FAO, following a twin-track approach in order to support both, long term development and humanitarian emergency help.

According to Oxfam, the cost of providing social protection to the poorest people in Africa would be around \$30 billion – “just three per cent of the amount injected so far to ward off a potential global financial crisis”. Despite renewed efforts, only a fraction of these funds are being provided. The increased emphasis on safety nets should be welcomed as a step in the right in the direction in the fight against hunger – yet their restrictiveness and their implementation prevent substantial changes. The major shortcoming, in the CFA as well as in the different programmes, is the failure to recognise the right to food in their programmes. The victims of hunger and under nourishment are not seen as rights holders, nor are states, institutions and the donor community seen as duty holders.

Conclusion

Any humanitarian or emergency measure to counter the Food Crisis must be accompanied by the correct policies in order to have a lasting impact on a country's development. These can be market and trade policies prescribing the release of food stocks, the reduction of tariffs, price controls, export restrictions, liberalisation or protectionist measures, as well as fiscal policies aiming to offset a negative Balance-of-Payment. All institutions and programmes give policy recommendations and advice.

Most international institutions are still following the same dogma of trade liberalisation and deregulation as they have been advocating for decades. The response to the crisis is almost unanimous. None of the institutions look critically at the effects of food-trade liberalization over the last years and its impact on food prices and price volatility. While 40 years ago, developing countries had annual trade surpluses of \$7 billion, they shrunk to \$1 billion within one decade and today, developing countries have a net food trade deficit of \$11 billion. Furthermore, the FAO estimates a \$50 billion deficit by 2030. With further liberalisation governments will be even less able to protect their farmers. These institutions urge governments to hold down inflation, mobilise external support to finance additional food imports, ensure an adequate level of foreign exchange reserves and assess the impact on the Balance-of-Payments. Most agencies and funds follow exactly the same old paradigm.

These organizations act as speculators instead of protecting farmers and consumers. Likewise, guaranteed price mechanisms are being dismantled all over the world as part of the neoliberal policies package, exposing farmers and consumers to extreme price volatility. National marketing boards, which grant micro-credits to smallholders, facilitate smallholder market access and restrict price volatility by buying surpluses off the market and

releasing them in years of bad harvests, were frequently criticized by the international institutions because of their alleged cost-ineffectiveness. Their positive impact on price stability and rural development, however, was ignored and the consequences can be felt today.

Yet institutions still promote further privatisation and liberalisation. Although the FAO is now showing its scepticism towards food trade liberalisation and the reliance on cheap imports but it is too early to assess if this is indicative of real re-thinking. As the IMF's and the WB's original policy advice were partly to blame for the food crisis, it is not surprising that their reactions leave a lot to be desired. The IMF pushes developing countries to depreciate their currencies in order to restrict inflation, an advice that is often impossible to implement in Africa since many countries are members of regional currency unions. The ability of these countries to adjust individual exchange rates is thus limited and they are obliged to keep inflation and deficit levels in a certain range. Hence, to achieve IMF targets which are tied to the loans, countries must raise interest rates and cut back on public spending. Tightening the policies advocated by these institutions would further decrease governments' budgets for public spending, further hindering development and economic growth. Investments into health, education and social safety nets would be the first to decline. The poor and the hungry, as always, would be the first to be hurt.

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FOOD CRISIS: The African response

By Claudia Poclaba¹



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In 2008, there was a worldwide spread food crisis which affected mostly least developed countries. In the developed world, most people were able to deal with the crisis reasonably well as a result of well-functioning safety nets. However, people in many relatively poor import-dependent countries, especially in Africa, experienced large price hikes that had permanent effects on their future income and their ability to escape poverty².

According to FAO, there is a way to identify countries in protracted food crisis, and this will be the definition given to identify our cases of study. Basically, the focus is on humanitarian assistance received by the country. If a country has received 10% or more of their ODA (official development assistance) as humanitarian aid since 2000, then it is classified as being in a protracted crisis³. Hence, 22 countries are in what is termed a protracted crisis as FAO said in its 2010 hunger report⁴, and 77% of this countries (17 out of 22) are from Africa. Almost 31% of African countries are part of FAO's list⁵.

This article looks only to some of these 17 countries, focusing on the measures each one has made since the last critical food crisis in 2008, considering that in July food prices increased and once again the world is facing a new food crisis⁶.

Countries in protracted crisis

Afghanistan
Angola
Burundi
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo
Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Guinea
Haiti
Iraq
Kenya
Liberia
Sierra Leone
Somalia
Sudan
Tajikistan
Uganda
Zimbabwe

Source: State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010, p.13

Because of a matter of space, the countries mentioned before will be separate in regional groups. First of all, we are going to start with the countries of eastern and central Africa area, more specifically Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute⁷, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Eritrea have the greatest levels of hunger. Also, Angola, Chad, and Somalia have the highest under-five mortality rates in Africa at 20 percent or more⁸.

Although commodity prices generally declined over the second half of 2011, they have remained at relatively high levels⁹. That is why measures must be taken, and to address the negative consequences of high levels commodity prices, these countries, which are also member of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), have adapted various strategies in different sectors and developed National Adaptation Programs of Action (NAPAs) that they have integrated into their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). In those actions, they focus on poverty reduction and climate change, acknowledging the fact of the direct relationship between these two. Because they considered climatic change consequences, such as increased intensity and frequency of storms, drought, and flooding, altered hydrological cycles, and precipitation variance have implications for future food availability¹⁰. Apart from these joint actions, each government tried on their own different policies. For example, Burundi's government¹¹ is working in a joint mission comprising World Food Programme, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to devise a short- and long-term response to the recurring food crisis in the region. Also, the provincial administration officials are planning to distribute beans and maize flour contributed by the government. Burundi is a small country in Central Africa, the overwhelming majority of its population lives in rural areas, making its economy primarily agricultural. Unsurprisingly, investments for agricultural research in Burundi suffered enormously as a result of the civil war¹². Donor funding halted, government contributions to agricultural research declined, and significant numbers of qualified researchers left the country, including all the expatriates¹³.

Other case is the Ethiopian one, in January 2010, Mitiku Kassa, the agriculture minister in Ethiopia, declared, "In the Ethiopian context, there is no hunger, no famine... It is baseless to claim hunger or famine. It is not evidence-based. The government is taking action to mitigate the problems"¹⁴. A big denial, considering that a year later the UN declared that 12.4 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti were affected by



chronic hunger and tens of thousands of people died from starvation¹⁵. Those actions mentioned by the agriculture minister are the 2004 Productive Safety Nets Programmes (PSNP). PSNP is a joint action of the Government of Ethiopia in partnership with donors, who designed a safety net program as part of its food security strategy. Unfortunately, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute the program has little impact on participants on average, due in part to transfer levels that fell far below program targets. Beneficiary households that received at least half of the intended transfers experienced a significant improvement in food security by some measures. However, estimates show that beneficiaries did not experience faster asset growth as a result of the programs¹⁶.

On the other hand, we got West African countries, such as Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, etc. In the case of Somalia, last year United Nations declared a famine in the drought-stricken state¹⁷, the national government also declared state of emergency in order to fight internal militia problems. Drought, conflict and political instability generated deterioration in hunger, which affected largely the country. In parts of southern Somalia, the conflict between the Islamist extremist group Al-Shaabab and the Western backed but weak government makes aid operations so difficult that real level of malnutrition is simply unknown¹⁸. Today Somalia is on the path to recovery but the situation remains critical and continued aid is vital in order to preserve food security¹⁹. Unfortunately, the coup of 1991 leave the country as a failed state, thought this year there was an election moving forward the country into a new period. Meanwhile, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia tried to enforce the security, especially for the humanitarian food assistance²⁰, thought for years several areas controlled by Al-Shabaab suffered the absence of major humanitarian actors, because this group did not want humanitarian assistance²¹. Nowadays, the country is one of the most humanitarian aid beneficiated. Even though is trying to develop its import independence, as already noted, is heavily dependent on food imports and this is crucially when food prices increase.

Apart from Somalia, there is an interesting successful example of what governments are doing in order to reduce the costs of food crisis. As a matter fact, Angola is making efforts across the country with integrated programs to combat hunger. The Integrated Programs of Rural Development, Fight Against hunger and Poverty are good examples. Also, there is a Rural Development Program, which is being given emphasis.

Finally, last April at FAO's Regional Conference for Africa, African nations discuss creation of an African food security trust fund²². Another joint action that will be focus on the support food security in the continent, and hopefully will help African countries to protect against another food crisis.

Conclusion

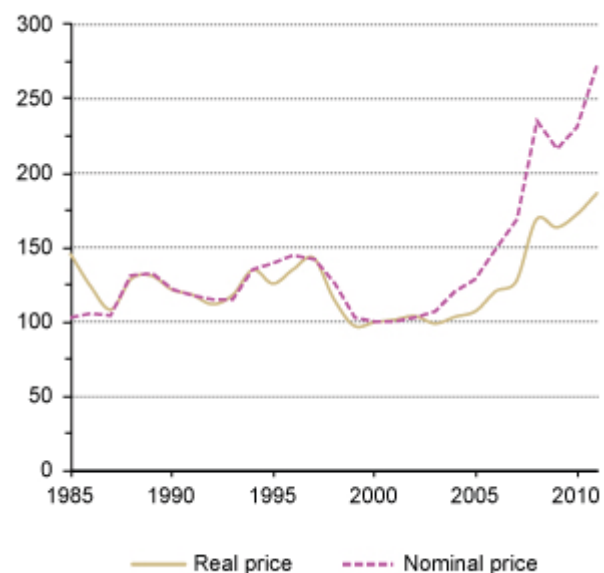
At the beginning of this article, I talked about that in 2008 food prices increased dramatically and apart from other factors, the final result was one: a global food crisis; causing political, economical and social instability. Also last year, 2011, was the driest period in the Eastern Horn of Africa since 1995²³. All these issues leave us to one question: WHY?

And when we talk about food prices increased the fundamental

causes of relatively high prices seem to persist; in particular, consumer demand in rapidly growing economies will increase, and the population continues to grow²⁴. On the supply side, challenges must be met to deal with the increasingly scarce natural resources in some regions, as well as declining rates of yield growth for some commodities. That is why investment in agriculture remains the most decisive instrument to promote sustainable long-term food security. Such investment has the potential to improve the competitiveness of domestic production, increase farmers' profits and make food more affordable for the poor. For that reason, during my investigation I tried to find out what the most affected African countries did.

Unfortunately, the matter is not only about what governments are doing in order to fight against food crisis, but there are a multiple set of factor which end ups in this situation. Internal crisis, drought, coups are just one of the many issues these countries must deal with. Although some of them found a way out or at least at trying to do it, such as Angola, there is one factor they cannot control apart from climate change: Market volatility. This is the challenge developed countries must face, if they are willing to help. Essentially, if because of the world economical crisis humanitarian assistance is being questioned.

Real and nominal food price indices, 1985-2011



Source: UNCTAD 2012



This picture is the property of OXFAM: <http://www.flickr.com/people/oxfam/>

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¹⁰ IFPRI July 2012- Strategies for Adapting to Climate Change in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa

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¹² http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/burundi_cb5.pdf

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