

Committee/Council: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Improving food security to support the return, reintegration and resettlement of displaced populations

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Introduction

Food security, contrary to what many people believe, is very closely linked to displaced populations and their efforts to return to their homes. It is important to note that most events that cause the displacement of populations also have an effect on food security. As a result, problems with food security are most likely already present before the people resettle. This is a major problem, the solution of which would make the reintegration of these people much easier.

Definition of Key-Terms

Displaced populations

“The displacement of people refers to the forced movement of people from their locality or environment and occupational activities. It is a form of social change caused by a number of factors, the most common being armed conflict. Natural disasters, famine, development and economic changes may also be a cause of displacement”,¹ according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Alternatively, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the definition is as follows: **“In the context of emergencies, displaced people are people who have had to leave their homes as a result of a natural, technological or deliberate event.”**²

Lastly, **“Displaced populations leave their homes in groups, usually due to a sudden impact, such as an earthquake or a flood, threat or conflict. There is usually an intention to return home.”**³, as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) remarks.

¹ “Displaced Person / Displacement | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.” UNESCO, Discovery Channel, Producer, www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/displaced-person-displacement/.

² “Displaced People.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 24 Aug. 2012, www.who.int/environmental_health_emergencies/displaced_people/en/.

³ “Complex/Manmade Hazards: Displaced Populations.” The Seven Fundamental Principles - IFRC, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/definition-of-hazard/displaced-populations/.

It should be noted that the displacement is forced (by the circumstances) and that the displaced population usually wishes to return to their homes.

Food security

Food security refers to the availability, accessibility and stability of food supply for a group of people. Check the “Background Information” section for more details.

The return, reintegration and resettlement

This phrase explains the goal of the resolution, namely that all people, which have been displaced, must return to the place, from which they have been displaced, and have the chance to continue their lives like all the other inhabitants of the said place.

Background Information

Food security

Food insecurity is one of the problems that the UN aims at dealing with. This is apparent from the Millennium Development Goals⁴ and the Sustainable Development Goals⁵, both of which list the eradication of hunger as a goal for the UN.



In order to accomplish similar goals, the concept of food security emerged during the 1970s. Several conferences, such as the World Food Conference of 1974⁶ and the World Food Summit of 1996⁷, have tried to achieve this and several organizations, such as the World Bank (WB) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), have taken part in the efforts. However, one can easily perceive the fact that hunger still exists to date and that it is prevalent in several countries, as the problem of food insecurity becomes increasingly more complex.

The concept of food security is divided into four basic pillars: **availability**, **access**, **nutrition** and **stability**.

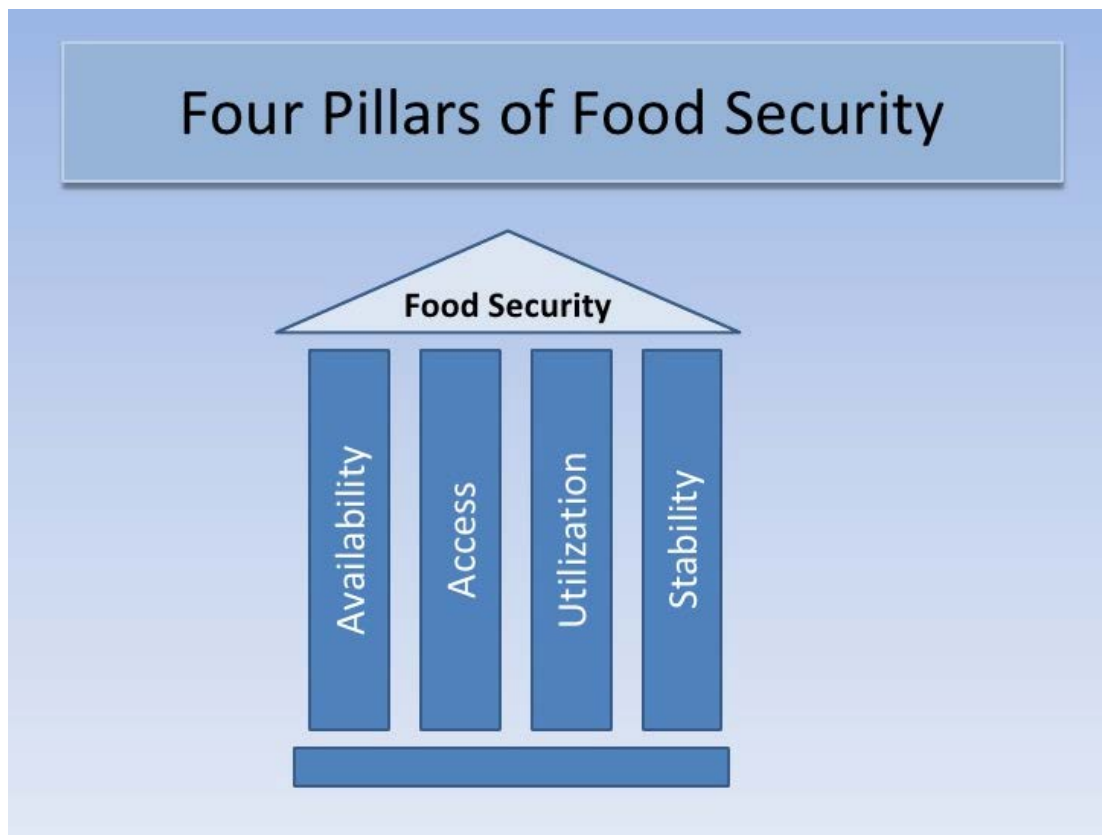
⁴ “United Nations Millennium Development Goals.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.

⁵ “Sustainable Development Goals: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.” United Nations, United Nations, www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300.

⁶ “Outcomes on Food.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/food.shtml.

⁷ “World Food Summit.” Fao.org, FAO of the UN, www.fao.org/wfs/index_en.htm

The four pillars of food security⁸



Availability

Availability refers to the supply of food. Food availability is achieved when the food in a market is enough to feed all the people that are supplied from the aforesaid market. Natural disasters, droughts and diseases can affect the availability of food in a specific region.

Access

This pillar is associated with the ability of an individual or a group to acquire sufficient food. Hence, it is the most problematic one. Although most of the time there is a sufficient quantity of food, **it is not distributed equally**. As a result, people who have low income or are unemployed cannot afford the necessary food and thus can be malnourished or even experience hunger. It is not a coincidence that 75% of all food insecure people live in rural areas and rely often on their own products to survive. Access to food can also be denied to certain people as a means of political pressure. Thus, access to food is not only an economic issue but also a social one.

⁸ Muro, Pasquale De, and Matteo Mazziotta. "Towards a Food Insecurity Multidimensional Index." Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/ERP/uni/FIMI.pdf.

Nutrition


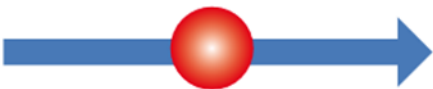
The human organism does not only just require a specific quantity of food but also specific food groups, vitamins and other substances. Therefore, it is not enough to have food; it must be the kind of food that the organism needs. In many cases, people that do get enough food, **lack basic nutrients** in their diet and therefore may experience health problems.

Stability

Food sources must also be **stable** rather than unpredictable so that they provide long-term security for the ones using them.

Chronic and transitory food insecurity

Food insecurity can be divided into transitory and chronic food insecurity. Chronic

	CHRONIC FOOD INSECURITY	TRANSITORY FOOD INSECURITY
		
<i>is...</i>	long-term or persistent.	short-term and temporary.
<i>occurs when...</i>	people are unable to meet their minimum food requirements over a sustained period of time.	there is a sudden drop in the ability to produce or access enough food to maintain a good nutritional status.
<i>results from...</i>	extended periods of poverty, lack of assets and inadequate access to productive or financial resources.	short-term shocks and fluctuations in food availability and food access, including year-to-year variations in domestic food production, food prices and household incomes.
<i>can be overcome with...</i>	typical long term development measures also used to address poverty, such as education or access to productive resources, such as credit. They may also need more direct access to food to enable them to raise their productive capacity.	transitory food insecurity is relatively unpredictable and can emerge suddenly. This makes planning and programming more difficult and requires different capacities and types of intervention, including early warning capacity and safety net programmes (see Box 1).

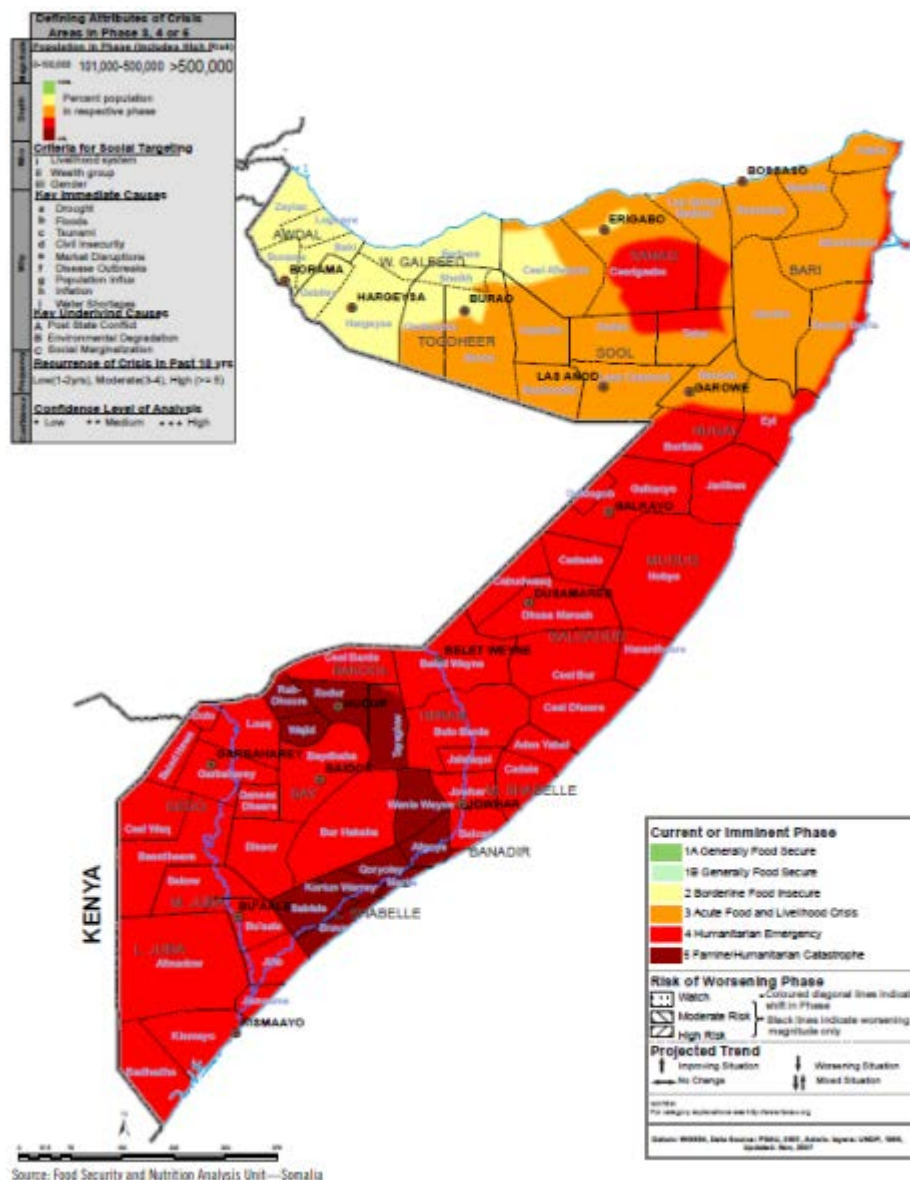
An outline of the differences and properties of the two types of food insecurity as it appeared on the “Food Security Information for Action Practical Guides”, published by the European Commission (EC) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO for short).

[Source](#)

insecurity is mainly associated with long-term and/or structural poverty, while transitory food insecurity is periodical and is caused by events such as conflicts, natural disasters and economic crisis. It should be noted that such events also cause the displacement of populations. Furthermore, the short-term effects of these events are closely linked with other long-term effects on the food security of the particular region.

Food security and displaced populations

As stated before, food security and the displacement of populations are very closely linked. One of the factors that sometimes force people to migrate is the unavailability or the inaccessibility of food. A good example of forced emigration due to food insecurity is the Great Famine in Ireland in 1845-1849⁹. At that time, the



Food security in Somalia

potato crop failed in multiple successive years. The cause was a disease called late blight. As a result of this event, about 1 million people died and 2 million were displaced. Other causes for displacement are also closely linked with food security. Economic crisis affects the income and the production of a society thus affecting both availability and access to food. Natural disasters also may harm food

Mokyr, Joel. "Great Famine." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 19 Apr. 2017, www.britannica.com/event/Great-Famine-Irish-history.⁹

production. A good example of such a situation is the drought in Somalia¹⁰, which has been observed in the last decade. This drought has displaced approximately 1, 5 million people and has had very severe effects on the food security in the country.

Armed conflicts

Armed conflicts are a special sub-category as they create very large refugee outflows in a very short time. They have similar effects to those a food crisis caused by a natural disaster has, especially because a lot of them take place in rural areas and, as a result, agricultural assets including infrastructure, land, and livestock are damaged or destroyed. This, in turn, means that the rural population is more susceptible to the economic effects of conflicts than the urban population. These are also the people more susceptible to displacement. A recent



World Food Program study suggests that the flow of refugees is larger in cases where there is food insecurity.¹¹ Another study by the FAO in the Syrian Arab Republic found out that most people believe that increased support for agriculture can discourage potential refugees.¹² Another problem is that food insecurity can spark up, intensify or prolong conflict. This creates a vicious cycle of conflict and food insecurity, which forces more and more people to leave their homes. Food security is also

essential for areas that have just exited conflicts as it prevents possible relapses into conflict. To summarize, most long-term conflicts have many negative effects on both the rural and the urban economy and make it difficult for displaced populations to return and resettle.

¹⁰ Drought in Somalia: a Migration Crisis. University of Liège, labos.ulg.ac.be/hugo/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2017/11/The-State-of-Environmental-Migration-2011-75-90.pdf.

¹¹ "Publications." UN World Food Programme, www.wfp.org/content/2017-root-exodus-food-security-conflict-and-international-migration.

¹² "Survey of Syrian Farmers Reveals Agriculture Should Be Kick-Started Now despite Huge Destruction." Fao.org, FAO of the UN, www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/878210/icode/.

Whatever the cause of the food crisis, it is undeniable that many displaced people have to cope with the effects of catastrophic events when they return to their homes. In many cases, these people do not have any economic resources and therefore end up in quite a difficult position when the time for them to resettle comes, as they lack the resources to rebuild their lives and ensure further food availability.

Dealing with refugee crises

One of the biggest problems that exist nowadays is finding a way to effectively combine humanitarian and development programs so as to achieve stability in a region. On the one hand, long-term programs have often failed to aid the population as far as its most dire needs are concerned. Furthermore, some of these programs only aim at dealing with the causes of a conflict. Such programs are usually too lengthy and, in the end, have a very limited effect on the situation as they don't help people reintegrate into society. In order to avoid relapses into conflict (and thus food insecurity), resilience must be built, which, in turn, needs development (mainly agricultural and rural) to be realized. A good example of that is Nepal, where agricultural policies have proven their capability at building resilience¹³. On the other hand, though, there are also numerous countries that require humanitarian help over a large period of time. A good example is South Sudan where it is really difficult to combine these programs. South Sudanese refugees that are in another country and internally displaced South Sudanese as well are all in need of humanitarian aid and at the same time the country needs funds to rebuild its economy. Due to the limited amount of funds available, it is not possible to serve both needs at the same time.

Ongoing refugee crises

Civil War in Syria¹⁴

The Syrian refugee crisis is undoubtedly one of the largest refugee crises in the world. Almost 11 million people have been displaced and 5, 6 million of them have fled to another country. As a result, the international humanitarian aid has been largely focused on this crisis. However, the conflict is still ongoing and people still cannot return to their homes. The problem of food security is very big in the country and the return of the refugees could cause further problems.

Afghanistan refugee crisis¹⁵

¹³ "What Is the Link Between Hunger and Migration?" Sustainable Development | IISD, 5 Oct. 2017, www.iisd.org/library/what-link-between-hunger-and-migration.

¹⁴ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopædia. "Syrian Civil War." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 July 2018, www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War.

Afghanistan has gone through a large period of time with constant instability and conflicts. This has created a continuous flow of refugees from 1979 until today. Over 2, 5 million Afghans were displaced during that period.

South Sudanese Civil War¹⁶

This civil war is still ongoing today and as a result, over 4 million people have been displaced. 2 million of them have already left the country.

Rohingya crisis¹⁷

The Rohingya crisis is an ongoing humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. The Rohingya¹⁸ are a Muslim minority in the area, which is not recognized by the Burmese authorities as one of the 135 ethnic groups in the country. They are regarded as illegal immigrants and the laws discriminate against them. The crisis in the area of Rakhine in Myanmar started when the insurgent group ARSA, consisting of Rohingya rebels, attacked more than thirty police posts. In retaliation for these attacks, troops began attacking the Rohingya people and burning their villages. To escape from violence, many Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, a country already struggling with humanitarian problems. The total number of displaced Rohingya is about 700.000.

You can see the situation of food security in various parts of the world through this website: <http://www.ipcinfo.org/>

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Bank

Both of these organizations have provided humanitarian aid to people in need. Especially the ICRC has helped a lot of people in need through various ways. Displaced people are one of the groups that have received a lot of the ICRC humanitarian aid, thus helping them cope with their situation and return to their homes.

¹⁵ "The Afghan Refugee Crisis in 2016." United States Institute of Peace, 28 Feb. 2017, www.usip.org/publications/2017/02/afghan-refugee-crisis-2016.

¹⁶ "Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/civil-war-in-south-sudan.

¹⁷ "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News, BBC, 24 Apr. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561.

¹⁸ "The Rohingya Crisis." CNN, Cable News Network, 13 Sept. 2017, edition.cnn.com/specials/asia/rohingya.

[Committee on World Food Security](#)

This committee aims at coordinating efforts to combat food insecurity. Established in 1974 by the FAO, it has a broad spectrum of operations not only coordinating efforts at national and international levels but also contributing with reports, evaluations and monitoring.

[Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#)

The FAO is a specialized agency of the UN that deals with matters relating to food and agriculture, so it is natural that it has played and continues to play an important role in this issue. It has supervised and conducted various studies that have helped the world understand the importance of food security and through its reports it has provided vital information for the other UN bodies to act upon. Other important contributions of FAO are: the establishment of the World Food Programme in 1963 for the deliverance of food to areas in emergency, the establishment of the Committee on World Food Security in 1974 and many more. Its broad spectrum of operations doesn't prevent it from helping in ongoing crises such as the Rohingya crisis and the war in Syria.

[World Food Programme](#)

Established in 1963 by the FAO, this organization has helped and is still helping millions of people worldwide. In recent years, this number has reached 80 million. According to the website of this organization: "On any given day, WFP has 5,000 trucks, 20 ships and 92 planes on the move, delivering food and other assistance to those in most need. Every year, we distribute approximately 12.6 billion rations at an estimated average cost per ration of US\$ 0.31." The commitment and the contribution of this organization to ending world hunger are undoubtable.

[International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#)

The IFPRI is an institute that also deals with food security and the eradication of poverty through research. It brings into focus the link between conflict and food insecurity trying to design and implement policies that can break the vicious cycle.

[More Economically Developed Countries that contribute with humanitarian aid](#)

Although many countries give a percentage of their Gross Domestic Product for humanitarian aid, some countries contribute more than others. According to their actions in 2017, the top contributors at the moment are: Sweden (\$767 million), Japan (\$843 million), the United Kingdom (\$2.5 billion), Germany (\$2.9 billion) and the United States of America (\$6.6 billion)

[Bangladesh](#)

Being affected by a refugee, crisis Bangladesh is already facing food insecurity. Over 700,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh making the situation there even worse.

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is badly affected by a refugee crisis that is closely linked with food insecurity. Whereas Syria used to be a country with a very large agricultural sector (approximately 25% of its GDP), now its production has been so harmed by the conflict that a big part of the population lives on the verge of famine. About 9 million Syrians are in need of food assistance.¹⁹ This food insecurity has greatly contributed to the large refugee waves that were felt not only in the Middle East but also even in Europe. Many people believe that a solution to this problem would slow the flow of refugees. Since the production has been harmed, it will not be easy for the returning refugees to rebuild their lives and achieve food security.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of the Event
1943	Hot Springs Conference of Food and Agriculture. It is the starting point for the international community's concern over food security. ⁸
1963	World Food Programme is established. ²⁰
1974	Establishment of the Committee on World Food Security in the First World Food Conference. ²¹
15 March 2011	The Syrian Civil War begins. ¹⁴
2013	The Civil War in South Sudan begins. ¹⁶
2016	World Humanitarian Summit ²²
August 2017	Rohingya refugee crisis ¹⁷

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

[Resolution A/RES/63/235](#)

¹⁹ "Counting the Cost Agriculture in Syria after Six Years of Crisis." Food and Agriculture Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2017, www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/FAO_SYRIADamageandLossReport.pdf.

²⁰ "Overview." World Food Programme, World Food Programme, www1.wfp.org/overview.

²¹ "About the CFS." Fao.org, FAO of the UN, www.fao.org/cfs/home/about/en/.

²² "World Humanitarian Summit 2016." AGENDA FOR HUMANITY, www.agendaforhumanity.org/summit.

This resolution generally deals with the topic of food security and acknowledges its importance.

The First World Food Conference

This conference is of great importance for the topic on the grounds that it gave prominence to the significance of food security and set it as an international goal, while emphasizing on the fact that food security is a major human right.

Hot Springs Conference of Food and Agriculture⁸

In this conference, the first concerns about food insecurity as an international issue were raised. It is the very first step of the battle against food insecurity.

[World Food Summit of 1996](#)

In this event, leaders from all over the world gathered to renew their commitment to fight hunger and food insecurity.

[World Humanitarian Summit of 2016](#)

The World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 aspired to create a more global and coordinated humanitarian aid plan of action so that it can be effective against nowadays problems of our world.

[The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

This declaration is very important for the topic at hand as it is related to the struggles of refugees and their rights. It is very important that all actions taken must be in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 is especially relevant as it states: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care...”

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

In the course of time, it becomes more and more clear how complex this problem is. This is the reason why outside of humanitarian aid for refugees not much has been done to solve the problem of food security for returning refugees. Coordination of various organizations and donations has mainly been the focus of the international efforts. In that context, each crisis is dealt with separately from the others. Many organizations provide humanitarian help such as, but not limited to, the FAO, the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (IRC). Also many other organizations have dedicated themselves to gathering data and researching the problem. Some of these

organizations are the Committee on World Food Security, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Possible Solutions

Even though humanitarian help from organizations can achieve in the short-term a satisfactory level of food security, there should be more coordination between the various organizations. Moreover, loan and other reconstruction programs must be able to relieve the pain and help the country and the population repair the damage in cases of conflict and natural disasters. It is very important to find a balance between humanitarian and development programs. Furthermore, in cases of economic crises, there should also be organized support programs that help a country. The solutions should ideally be universal and applicable to most cases. However, the present global problems and refugee crises must also be taken into consideration.

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