

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES: CRISIS RESPONSE, BUILDING RESILIENCE AND IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

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OVERVIEW

Conflict and climate change are the two main drivers of hunger. Achieving food security in climate-sensitive, fragile and conflict-affected states is challenging and requires compromises and coordination by actors across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. What sort of planning and vision is required to ensure both sustainable peace and sustainable food systems?

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

This panel brought the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) together with peacebuilding and civil society actors to discuss challenges, share successes and failures, and identify lessons that bridge short-term emergency support and longer-term resilience and development interventions while supporting local peace and stability. This discussion will feed into a review of Sustainable Development Goal 16 at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York in July 2019.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Food security and conflict are strongly correlated. In 2018, 113 million people across 53 countries experienced acute hunger requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihoods assistance. Of these, 72 million lived in just eight countries, seven of which were affected by conflict. Among the conflict drivers on the community level is competition over natural resources. At the macro level, by some estimates 40 per cent of intrastate conflicts in the past had been linked to disputes over natural resources (e.g. land or water). Demographic challenges are a further complication.

Countries that are highly reliant on food imports and that have subsidies for staple products have an increased exposure to food price volatility. This can be a factor in social instability. Increased diversity of a country's food basket can mitigate this risk and increase resilience across a number of exogenous shocks, including climate-related events as well as conflict.

A main challenge is the need for contextual understanding of conflict and the foundational nature of conflict sensitivity to inform programming.

Support for longer-term planning is often constrained as a result of political interests and election cycles, and it is further complicated by the recent rise in populist rhetoric. Attention and care should be given to working with relevant stakeholders at all levels to ensure more integrated and sustainable approaches over the longer term.

Preliminary research suggests that the more resilient a community is, the less inclined it is to engage in political violence. However, more evidence is urgently required on these potential linkages in order to improve policies and actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Inform the design of all programming and interventions with conflict-sensitive approaches. Conflict sensitivity is not necessarily incompatible with humanitarian principles. Make longer-term investments, beyond one-year time frames, in order to enable transformative engagement with communities.
- Recognize that partnerships across different actors are fundamental at the global, regional and local levels; and that partnership across different UN agencies is vital in implementation. Incorporate national ownership into the partnerships.
- Share knowledge across partners engaging in humanitarian-, development- and peace-related action. Moreover, make knowledge- and research-based efforts on the linkage between food security and resilience and how these may contribute to improving the conditions for local peace.



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