FOOD WARS

Conflict, Hunger, and Globalization, 2023

Martha, a former restaurant owner, makes Kisra, her homeland's dish. After fleeing from the conflict in South Sudan, she sought refuge in Ethiopia. *Petterik Wiggers / Oxfam*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most wars of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have been "food wars": food and hunger were used as weapons, food and food-related water and energy infrastructure were damaged intentionally or incidentally, and food insecurity persisted as a legacy of conflict destructiveness. Frequently, food insecurity, in turn, is a trigger or underlying cause of conflict.

In 2023, crisis-level acute food insecurity reached an all-time high, with violent conflict a key driver. The number of forcibly displaced people likewise reached a record level of 117.3 million people, with 77% of them in countries affected by hunger crises.

This paper analyzes 54 active conflict, refugee-hosting, and conflict legacy countries with populations in 2023 facing "crisis-level" acute food insecurity, i.e., at Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 3 or higher. In total, nearly 278 million people in these countries faced crisis-level hunger in 2023, accounting for 99% of the global population at IPC 3+ (281.6 million people). In

all 54 countries, conflict was a major cause of food insecurity, although in some, weather extremes or economic shocks may have been the principal driver. Given the daily crude death rates (CDRs) associated with IPC 3, Oxfam estimates that in 2023, conflict-induced food insecurity led to between 7,784 and 21,406 deaths per day. As IPC data are not sex-disaggregated, it is not possible to use a gender lens to look at these conflict-hunger links.

That conflict causes catastrophic food insecurity has been undeniable, and reports from UN agencies and other international organizations recognize this phenomenon. Humanitarians and development professionals increasingly employ a humanitarian-development-peacebuilding "Triple Nexus" approach, thereby seeking to break down silos separating emergency aid, contributions to medium- and longer-term food self-reliance, and conflict resolution efforts.

War-displacement-hunger crises occur in countries that continue to rely heavily on primary product exports—gold and livestock products in Sudan, petroleum in South Sudan, coffee in Burundi, and grain and oilseeds in Ukraine, where Russia has weaponized food and agriculture. Paradoxically, peacebuilding efforts have often assumed that economic liberalization offers the best or only pathway to sustainable peace. Yet struggle for control over fungible primary commodities can fund more violence, increased inequality, continued instability, and the risk of renewed conflict.

International financial institutions and many donors consider attracting foreign direct investment and the development of an export-oriented economy as crucial elements of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. However, focusing on land and product market liberalizations without establishing inclusive governance can worsen inequality, put low- and middle-income countries that are emerging from conflict into a dependent position in the global economy, and create the potential for a resumption of conflict.

Abundant natural resources and dependence on high-value export cash crops can contribute to the outbreak of civil war, especially where primary products, such as coffee, cocoa, and cotton, dominate exports. In the Global South, the often illegal clearing of forests for commercial agricultural activities can deprive communities of their livelihoods and foment violent conflict and forced migration. Mining operations have often had similar outcomes.

A 2008 study concluded that "it is not export cropping per se but rather the structures of production and markets and the context of food and financial policies that determine local household incomes and peaceful or belligerent outcomes." Fifteen years on, this conclusion remains valid. Large-scale private

investment—whether foreign or domestic in origin—adds to political economic instabilities where investors seize control over land and water resources and displace local peoples. Markets for high value primary commodities need to be more carefully vetted and regulated, so they do not fund and fuel conflict.

Globalization is not just about broader and deeper global economic connections and liberalized trade and capital flows. It also includes international norms and institutions promoting humanitarianism, human rights, social justice, and fair trade. Together these aspects might be called "globalization's bright side." A key question is how best to ensure that private-sector actors behave in a socially responsible manner.

Voluntary instruments seek to encourage private-sector actors to engage in corporate social responsibility and sound environmental, social, and governance practices. However, voluntary frameworks have not always delivered responsible environmental and labor policies, or sourcing that upholds human rights or supports gender equality.

Some efforts seek to link export crops to efforts to achieve peace, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental restoration. Other proposed solutions focus on adopting more holistic national development strategies, including food-systems approaches that protect and promote the right to food and livelihood security, as well as policy approaches and frameworks that might more effectively consider conflict, globalization, and climate change in food and nutrition policy.

Support for peace transitions must address the livelihood needs of long-suffering communities, as well as returning refugees, so they can, in time, become food self-reliant. All of this is as much art as science, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Agricultural export commodities are important sources of revenue for smallholder farmers and governments in conflict-affected, food-insecure countries. The conflict implications of export- and food-crop value chains are therefore crucial for future food-wars policy discussions and actions. The involvement of private-sector actors, all along the value chains of these products, could be critical in charting pathways forward that favor peace. So more research on the relationship between export crop production, supply chains, and food wars is essential.

The *human security* approach to development incorporates the necessary holistic conception of peace. It recognizes the interdependence and

indivisibility of civil-political and economic, social, and cultural rights, along with multiple related and inter-related concepts of *security*, including economic and personal security (with attention to gender-based violence and other gender dimensions). It has the potential to end cycles of grievance that fuel persistent or resurgent violent conflict, while promoting food security and a global economy that works for everyone, not just the top 1%.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2023, crisis-level acute food insecurity reached an all-time high, with violent conflict a key driver.[1] In these food wars, combatants often used hunger as a weapon and damaged food supplies, as well as food and food-related water and energy infrastructure, either deliberately or incidentally (see Box 1 for further discussion of the food-wars concept). The number of forcibly displaced people, usually as a result of conflict and political oppression, likewise reached a record level at the end of 2023, with 117.3 million people uprooted within their countries and across borders.[2] Some 77% of them lived in countries or territories affected by hunger crises.[3]

Box 1. Food Wars

Most wars of the late 20th and early 21st century can be characterized as "food wars," meaning that food and hunger were used as weapons, food and food-related water and energy infrastructure were damaged as intentional targets or incidental casualties of violence, and food insecurity persisted as a legacy of conflict destructiveness. The food-wars concept also identifies situations where food insecurity is a trigger or underlying cause of conflict, in cases where food shortage (availability), lack of secure access to adequate food (food poverty), malnutrition, or some combination of individual, household, or community food insecurity contributed as a root cause of conflict.[4]

Sudan presents one particularly horrific example of a food war. In mid-2023, violent conflict resumed in Sudan, as the country's armed forces and paramilitary fighters fought for political power. Deaths mounted as the fighting restricted access to food, water, and movement. Among deliberate or collateral damages were Khartoum-area storehouses for humanitarian food supplies, which were looted or destroyed. In July 2024, IPC confirmed the presence of famine in the North Darfur region of the country.[5] Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees have fled to neighboring countries, creating influxes to which humanitarian agencies, local residents, and governments were ill-equipped to respond.[6]

Many of those fleeing are destitute women and children. Aisha Ibrahim, age 37, told Oxfam that she had to walk four days with her four children, leaving their home in Sudan for Joda, across the border in South Sudan. She left her husband behind to protect their home. "I used to live in a proper home," she said. "I could never imagine myself in this situation." She added that she has no family ties or social network in South Sudan. "All my people are in Sudan," she said.[7]

Even before the refugees moved into South Sudan, humanitarians were predicting record hunger numbers there in the face of persistent severe flooding; additional economic disruptions; violence destroying local food production, storage, and market capacities; and human displacement.[8] Self-reliant food production, which had been carefully nurtured with aid, collapsed.

Ongoing food-and-conflict disasters include multiyear wars in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, as well as the 2023–2024 conflict between Palestinian armed groups and Israel. The Russia-Ukraine war that escalated in 2022 produced huge population displacements plus spiking food, fuel, and fertilizer prices, disrupting global food supply chains. This threatened food security across the world, which was already stressed by climate change, economic shocks, and COVID-19 deaths and disruptions.[9]

Food wars showcase the uncertainties and unsustainability of past peace processes or agreements, in situations where social inequalities, poverty, hunger, injustices, and armed competition for power persist as root causes and triggers for renewed armed violence. Peace in such circumstances remains fragile, as seen in such cases as Burundi and Colombia. Likewise, all too often, we see reversion to conflict in situations deemed "postconflict," as in Mozambique.[10]

War-displacement-hunger crises, moreover, occur in countries that continue to rely heavily on primary product exports for their revenues, for example, gold and livestock products in Sudan (95% of export earnings),[11] petroleum in South Sudan (87%),[12] coffee in Burundi (69%) ,[13] and grain and oilseeds in Ukraine,[14] where Russia has weaponized food and agriculture. Paradoxically, peace-building efforts too often assume that economic liberalization offers the best or only pathway to sustainable peace.[15] Yet struggle for control over fungible primary commodities lead to more violence, increased inequality, continued instability, and the risk of renewed conflict.[16]

There is an urgent need to rethink policies that connect food, globalization, and conflict and break the two-way links between food insecurity and conflict. Some promising possibilities include the "Triple Nexus" humanitarian-

development-peacebuilding framework, which seeks to break down the silos that traditionally separate these three areas. Another important approach is the revival of "human security" thinking and framing that considers together humanitarian, human rights, and basic development needs and the interconnections and indivisibility of civil-political and economic, social, and cultural rights.[17]

This briefing paper draws on academic, policy, and humanitarian practitioner literature, and compares the geography of the conflict-food insecurity-globalization links in 2002–2003 and 2023. In particular, it notes that global policymakers' priority emphasis on foreign direct investment, liberalized trade, and reduced market regulation, as a path from humanitarian assistance to self-reliant food security, equitable economic development, and peace, fails to break the links between conflict and hunger or to promote sustainable peace.

Section 2 reviews the state of the world's food wars in 2023 and the links to globalization, focusing especially on the share of merchandise trade in a country's overall economy. The results indicate how globalization has reduced or exacerbated risks of food insecurity and conflict.

Section 3 considers how global norms and policy frameworks that value sustainability and affirm the human right to food have affected food-conflict-globalization dynamics and outlooks. The discussion then turns to gaps and successes.

Why is it so hard to break the links between conflict and hunger in both directions? And what additional actions are required? The simple answer to the question is that food wars involve multiple stressors, including climate and economic volatilities. Furthermore, they are embedded in historical, political-geographic, ethnic, and religious divisions, including regional structures of violence. Peace agreements come and go but violence persists because diplomats and military professionals who design agreements to cease formal military hostilities too often fail to take into account the legacies of colonial and post-colonial structures that favor persistent inequalities, human rights violations, and oppression. Political actors may mobilize such forces for their own ends.

The paper concludes with policy recommendations.

2. THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF CONFLICT, HUNGER, AND GLOBALIZATION IN 2023

Table 1 shows 54 active conflict, refugee-hosting, and conflict legacy countries and territories with populations in 2023 at Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 3 or higher. IPC classifies a country's acute food insecurity in five phases, with IPC 5 ("catastrophe/famine") the most severe, and IPC 3 or higher considered "crisis level" (see Annex for more details). In addition to indicating food-insecurity status and the principal driver, the table notes the country's active (or not) conflict status and conflict drivers, but not conflict intensity (obviously localized water conflicts in Kenya are of considerably lower intensity than full-scale war in Syria or Yemen). The next columns indicate the degree of globalization based on the weight of merchandise trade in the country's economy. The final column lists each country's principal export commodities, with particular attention to primary product exports—agricultural exports, such as coffee, cocoa, and cotton, as well as extractive industry products—and low-end manufactures such as clothing and scrap metal. Finally, the table makes some comparisons between the findings in 2023 and those of an earlier study on conflict, hunger, and globalization that analyzed 2002–2003 data, specifically with regard to conflict-legacy situations reverting to conflict.[18]

In total, nearly 278 million people in the 54 countries and territories faced crisis-level hunger in 2023, accounting for 99% of the global population at IPC 3+ (281.6 million people). In all of these countries and territories, conflict was a major cause of food insecurity, although in some of them, weather extremes or economic shocks may have been the principal driver.[19] As the table indicates, the countries with the five highest populations at IPC 3+ in 2023 were DRC (25.8 million people), Nigeria (24.9 million), Sudan (20.3 million), Ethiopia (19.7 million), and Yemen (18 million), all of which experienced active conflicts.

Given the population at IPC 3+ in the 54 countries, and using the associated daily crude death rates (CDRs), Oxfam estimates that in 2023, conflict-induced food insecurity was associated with between 7,784 and 21,406 deaths per day (see Annex for details on this calculation). This conservative estimate does not factor in the higher CDRs linked to IPC 4 and 5.

CONFLICT LEGACY, NOT POST-CONFLICT

It is important to note that the available evidence on conflict as a driver of food insecurity calls into question the widely used notion of "post-conflict"

situations.[20] Post-conflict countries tend to have large numbers of food-insecure, low-income people living in contexts of high socioeconomic (vertical) and cultural-political (horizontal) inequality, which often involve tensions over access to land, water, and other economic and political resources, and exclusions based on historical political-geographic (national), ethnic, or refugee identity or additional occupational or religious factors.[21] We find multiple instances of post-conflict situations reverting to active conflict (e.g., the Central African Republic and Mozambique[22]). The term, "**conflict legacy,"** more appropriately describes these situations, while "**active conflict"** denotes hot warfare, i.e., armed conflict that results in significant deaths of combatants and civilians. A case study of Burundi (see Box 2 following Table 2) illustrates conditions that create potential for countries with previous conflict to revert to active armed violence.

Conflict legacy countries illustrate the food-wars principle that the legacies of conflict persist and sow seeds of renewed conflicts where the injustices and inequalities that served as root causes of earlier violence have not been addressed effectively. The legacy disrupts social institutions and destroys livelihoods, lands, livestock, markets and critical infrastructure, including for food storage and water access. Landmines and unexploded ordnance are another legacy of conflict; they reduce potential food and export crop production, security, and peace.[23] Together, these factors threaten a rapid return to political and social stability and undermine reconstruction for future peace. As a result, many conflict legacy countries are places where peace agreements have formally ended armed hostilities, but by all non-diplomatic definitions of "peace" and "security," they remain not-peaceful.

TABLE 1. FOOD INSECURITY AND LINKS TO GLOBALIZATION IN CONFLICT COUNTRIES, 2023

COUNTRY	POPULATION AT IPC 3+, 2023 (MILLIONS)	PRIMARY DRIVER OF ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY	NATURE OF CONFLICT	MERCHANDISE TRADE AS % OF GDP	PRINCIPAL EXPORT COMMODITIES		
					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
WEST AFRICA							
Benin	0.4	Economic shocks	**Active;** non-state armed groups in Atacora and Alibori	42.2			
Burkina Faso	3.4	Conflict	**Active**; non-state armed groups; unstable government	50.0	F&A: cotton, cashews, sesame	EI: gold, zinc	
Cameroon	3	Conflict	**Active**	27.9	F&A: cocoa beans, timber, bananas	EI: oil, natural gas, gold	
Central African Republic	2.7	Conflict	**Active**; "postconflict" in 2002–2003	25.0	F&A: timber, rum	EI: gold, diamonds,	Manufactures: large construction vehicles
Chad	2.3	Conflict	**Active**	44.9	F&A: sesame, gum arabic	EI: oil, gold, silver	
Guinea	0.7	Economic shocks	2,200 **refugees**	60.7	F&A: cocoa beans, cashews, fish	EI: gold, bauxite, aluminum oxide, iron ore	
Côte d'Ivoire	1.0	Economic shocks	40,000 **refugees**	49.7	F&A: cocoa beans & paste, rubber	EI: gold, refined petroleum	
Liberia	0.5	Economic shocks	**Conflict legacy**	64.6	F&A: rubber, cocoa beans, palm oil	EI: gold, iron	Manufactures: ships

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					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
Mali	1.3	Conflict	**Active**	65.5	F&A: cotton, sesame, timber	EI: gold, oil	
Mauritania	0.5	Economic shocks	100,000 **refugees** from Mali	88.6	F&A: fish	EI: iron, gold, copper	
Niger	3.3	Conflict	**Active**; insurgency, multiple foreign interventions	20.1	F&A: sesame, onions	EI: gold, uranium, oil	
Nigeria	24.9	Conflict	**Active**; insurgency in North and Northeast	28.6	F&A: cocoa beans	EI: oil, natural gas	Manufactures: scrap vessels
Senegal	1.3	Economic shocks	10,000 **refugees**	52.8	F&A: fish, peanuts/groundnuts	EI: gold, oil, phosphates	
Sierra Leone	1.2	Economic shocks	**Conflict Legacy**	89.9	F&A: timber, cocoa beans	EI: titanium, diamonds, aluminum	
Togo	0.5	Economic shocks	**Active**	50.6	F&A: cotton	EI: oil, electricity, calcium phosphates	
GREATER HORN OF AFRICA							
Djibouti	0.3	Economic shocks	Part of Horn **cluster**; foreign bases; close economic ties to Ethiopia	235.8	F&A: palm oil, livestock, kidney beans, industrial fatty acids/oils, coffee	EI: chlorides Port services and re-exports are significant	
Ethiopia	19.7	Weather extremes	**Active** insurgencies; recent high-intensity civil war with Eritrean intervention	13.1	F&A: coffee, sesame, vegetables, cut flowers	EI: gold	Manufactures: aircraft parts
Kenya	5.4	Weather extremes	**Active**; water scarcity leads to localized violence	24.0	F&A: tea, cut flowers, coffee	EI: oil, titanium	

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					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
Somalia	6.6	Weather extremes	**Active**	No data	F&A: livestock, sesame, insect resins	EI: gold	
South Sudan	7.8	Economic shocks	**Active**; conflict between government and ethnic militia	47.5	F&A: forage crops, timber, insect resins	EI: oil, gold	
Sudan	20.3	Conflict	**Active**, intensified conflict in 2023 the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	10.9	F&A: sesame, livestock, cotton, peanuts/groundnuts	EI: gold, oil	
Uganda	1.8	Weather extremes	1.6 million **refugees** ; active conflict in 2002–2003; livestock raiding in Karamoja and road ambushes	37.2	F&A: coffee, milk, fish, tobacco	EI: gold	
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA							
Angola	1.3	Weather extremes	**Conflict legacy**	64.3		EI: oil, natural gas, diamonds, asphalt mixtures	
Burundi	2.3	Weather extremes	**Conflict legacy** (see Box 1); active conflict in 2002–2003	51.3	F&A: coffee, tea, beer	EI: gold, rare earth metal ores	
Congo-Brazzaville	1.9	Weather extremes	**Refugees** from CAR & DRC	64.7	F&A: timber	EI: copper, oil, tin	
DRC	25.8	Conflict	**Active;** insurgency in the eastern part of the country and other zones	42.2		EI: copper, cobalt, oil, tin, diamonds	

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					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
Malawi	4.4	Weather extremes	50,000 **refugees**	17.3	F&A: tobacco, tea, peanuts, dried legumes	EI: gold	
Mozambique (specific areas)	3.3	Conflict	**Active;** "post-conflict" in 2002–2003	89.1		EI: coal, aluminum, gold, natural gas, hydro-electricity, titanium, coke	
Tanzania (specific areas)	1.1	Weather extremes	300,000 **refugees**	26.7	F&A: cashews, legumes	EI: gold, copper, precious metals	
Zambia (specific areas)	2.0	Economic shocks	80,000 **refugees**	67.4		EI: raw & refined copper, gold, precious stones	Manufactures: iron alloys
Zimbabwe	3.5	Economic shocks	20,000 **refugees**	61.9	F&A: tobacco	EI: gold, nickel, diamonds	Manufactures: iron alloys
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA							
Algeria (refugees)	0.04	Conflict	**200,000 refugees** from Western Sahara	39.0		EI: oil, natural gas, fertilizers, ammonia	
Egypt (refugees)	0.2		**Refugees from Syria**	30.0		EI: natural gas, refined & crude petroleum	Manufactures: fertilizer, garments
Iraq (refugees)	0.02	Conflict	**Conflict legacy;** Syrian refugees	84.3		EI: Oil, natural gas, gold	
Jordan (refugees)	0.5		**Refugees from Syria**	75.2		EI: phosphates, phosphoric acid	Manufactures: fertilizer, garments, jewelry

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					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
Lebanon	2.3	Economic shocks	1.4 million **refugees** and 200,000 Palestinian refugees	102.4	F&A: grapes		Manufactures: plastics, jewelry, scrap iron
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2.8	Conflict	**Active**; conflict with Israel	No data	F&A: dates, olive oil	EI: building stone	Manufactures: scrap iron, plastic lids, furniture, seating
Syria	12.9	Economic shocks	**Active** conflict in parts of the country with multiple foreign interventions	Incomplete data 111.9 (2021 data)	F&A: olive oil, cumin seeds, pistachios, tomatoes, apples, pears, spices, pitted fruits		
Yemen	18.0	Conflict	**Active;** civil war with multiple foreign interventions	28.6	F&A: fish	EI: oil, gold	Manufactures: industrial chemical liquids, scrap iron
SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA							
Afghanistan	19.9	Economic shocks	**Active;** non-state armed actors fighting government forces	43.8	F & A: opium, figs, grapes, cotton, fruits, nuts	EI: gold, coal	
Bangladesh	11.9	Economic shocks	1 million **refugees**	28.0			Manufactures: clothing, leather footwear
Pakistan	11.8	Weather extremes	**Active;** conflict with India over Kashmir, insecure border with Afghanistan	23.3	F&A: rice		Manufactures: textiles, clothing, leather goods, surgical instruments
Sri Lanka	5.5	Economic shocks	**Conflict legacy**	34.0	F&A: tea, cinnamon	EI: precious stones	Manufactures: clothing, used tires, rubber products

COUNTRY	POPULATION AT IPC 3+, 2023 (MILLIONS)	PRIMARY DRIVER OF ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY	NATURE OF CONFLICT	MERCHANDISE TRADE AS % OF GDP	PRINCIPAL EXPORT COMMODITIES		
					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
Other	10.7	Conflict	**Active**	45.07			
CARIBBEAN							
Dominican Republic	1.6	Economic shocks	100,000 **refugees**	34.3	F&A: tobacco	EI: gold	Manufactures: medical instrument, power equipment, garments
Haiti	4.9	Conflict	**Active;** insecurity, gang violence	24.6	F&A: re-export of Colombian cocaine and Jamaican marijuana, mangoes, essential oils, fish		Manufactures: t-shirts, scrap iron
CENTRAL AMERICA							
El Salvador	0.9	Weather extremes	**Conflict legacy;** gang violence	65.1	F&A: sugar		Manufactures: clothing, electrical equipment, capacitors, plastic lids, packaged medicines, toilet paper
Guatemala	4.3	Economic shocks	**Conflict legacy;** gang violence	43.6	F&A: bananas, coffee, palm oil, cardamom, sugar		Manufactures: clothing, iron alloys
Honduras	2.4	Weather extremes	**Conflict legacy;** gang violence	84.0	F&A: coffee, palm oil, shrimp, bananas	EI: gold	Manufactures: clothing, insulated wiring
Nicaragua	0.2	Weather extremes	**Conflict legacy**	102.6	F&A: coffee, beef, cigars	EI: gold	Manufactures: clothing, insulated wiring
SOUTH AMERICA							
Colombia	4.5	Weather extremes	**Active;** non-state armed groups fighting armed	30.9	F&A: coffee	EI: oil, coal, gold	

COUNTRY	POPULATION AT IPC 3+, 2023 (MILLIONS)	PRIMARY DRIVER OF ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY	NATURE OF CONFLICT	MERCHANDISE TRADE AS % OF GDP	PRINCIPAL EXPORT COMMODITIES		
					FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (F&A)	EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS (EI)	MANUFACTURES
			forces; 1.6 million residents (in 2023) and 2.9 m **refugees** and migrants (in 2022) at IPC 3+				
Ecuador (refugees and migrants)	0.3	Economic shocks	Refugee-hosting	52.2	F&A shellfish, bananas, fish	EI: crude & refined petroleum	
Peru (refugees and migrants)	0.8	Economic shocks	1.54 million refugees and migrants	42.2.		EI: copper ore & refined copper, gold, natural gas, refined petroleum	
EUROPE							
Ukraine	7.3	Conflict	**Active;** Russian invasion	55.7	F&A: corn, sunflower seed oil, wheat, rapeseed		Manufactures: iron and iron products, insulated wiring

Sources: *GRFC 2024* (see Footnote 1) for population at IPC 3+, primary driver, and nature of conflict. Supplemental sources on nature of conflict: ;; ACAPS. (2023). Explore Our Data. https://www.acaps.org/en/data; ACLED (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project). (2023). Data Export Tool. https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/ (2023); Messer and Cohen (2008) (see Footnote 18); SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). (2022). *SIPRI Yearbook 2022.* Stockholm: SIPRI; Morris, N. and Kloppe-Santamaría, G. (2022). "The Many, Varied Violences Behind the Central American Exodus." November 15. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/11/migrants-violence-central-america-exodus/. Data on Merchandise Trade as % of GDP: World Bank (2023). Merchandise trade (% of GDP) - World | Data (worldbank.org). Data on principal exports: US Central Intelligence Agency. (2024). *The World Fact Book.* https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook

Note: *GRFC 2024* reports on the highest figures for 2023 for people at IPC 3+ for each country and territory.

CONFLICT AND SEVERE ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY

The population at IPC 4 ("emergency") in 2023 was more than 36 million people across 39 countries and territories. In at least 11 of those countries and territories—all of them conflict-affected—over 1 million people faced IPC 4 acute food insecurity. More than 58% of the people at IPC 4 (20.9 million) were found in just five conflict-affected countries (indicated in bold in Table 2): Sudan, Afghanistan, DRC, South Sudan, and Bangladesh (Table 2). In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip), 53% of the population was at IPC 4.

TABLE 2. COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WITH OVER 1 MILLION PEOPLE IN IPC/CH PHASE 4 IN 2023

COUNTRY	POPULATION AT IPC/CH 4 (MILLIONS)
Sudan	**6.3**
Afghanistan	**6.1**
Democratic Republic of the Congo	**3.4**
South Sudan	**2.9**
Bangladesh	**2.2**
Pakistan	2.2
Somalia	1.9
Haiti	1.8
Kenya	1.2
Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip)	1.2
Nigeria	1.1

Source: *GRFC 2024.*

In 2023 and early 2024, conflict was a key factor in all of the countries and territories with estimated or projected populations at IPC 5: the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip), South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia, and Mali. In all, 705,000people were affected. By July 2024 (beyond the period of analysis for this Briefing Paper), IPC found that famine was present among internally

displaced people in North Darfur, Sudan, as a direct result of the violent conflict in that country.

As IPC data are not sex-disaggregated,[24] it is not possible to use a gender lens to look at these conflict-hunger links.

Box 2. The Legacies of Conflict in Burundi[25]

In the wake of Burundi's civil war, people say they value safety, calm, and an end to criminal banditry and pillage. These are key to rebuilding livelihoods and assets, such as livestock, seeds, housing, and other fungible materials and wealth that have been stripped and will take time to recover, if they ever do. Only when improved material conditions allow Burundians to meet basic needs for food, shelter, healthcare, and reliable jobs do they think they can experience peace that supports hopefulness for the future. People also value education for themselves and their children as essential steps toward more secure, sustaining, and satisfying lives. Research suggests that younger Burundians are not easily recruited to violence.

But restoration of livelihoods poses a huge challenge. In the case of coffee (the country's key export), farmers' individual experience of violence influences their decisions about whether or not to invest in renewing coffee orchards. Possible factors include reduction in household labor availability, destruction of infrastructure that reduces access to markets, and reluctance to wait three to four years before experiencing returns on investments. Additionally, some farmers object to paying taxes to a government that used coffee-based revenues to fund arms.[26]

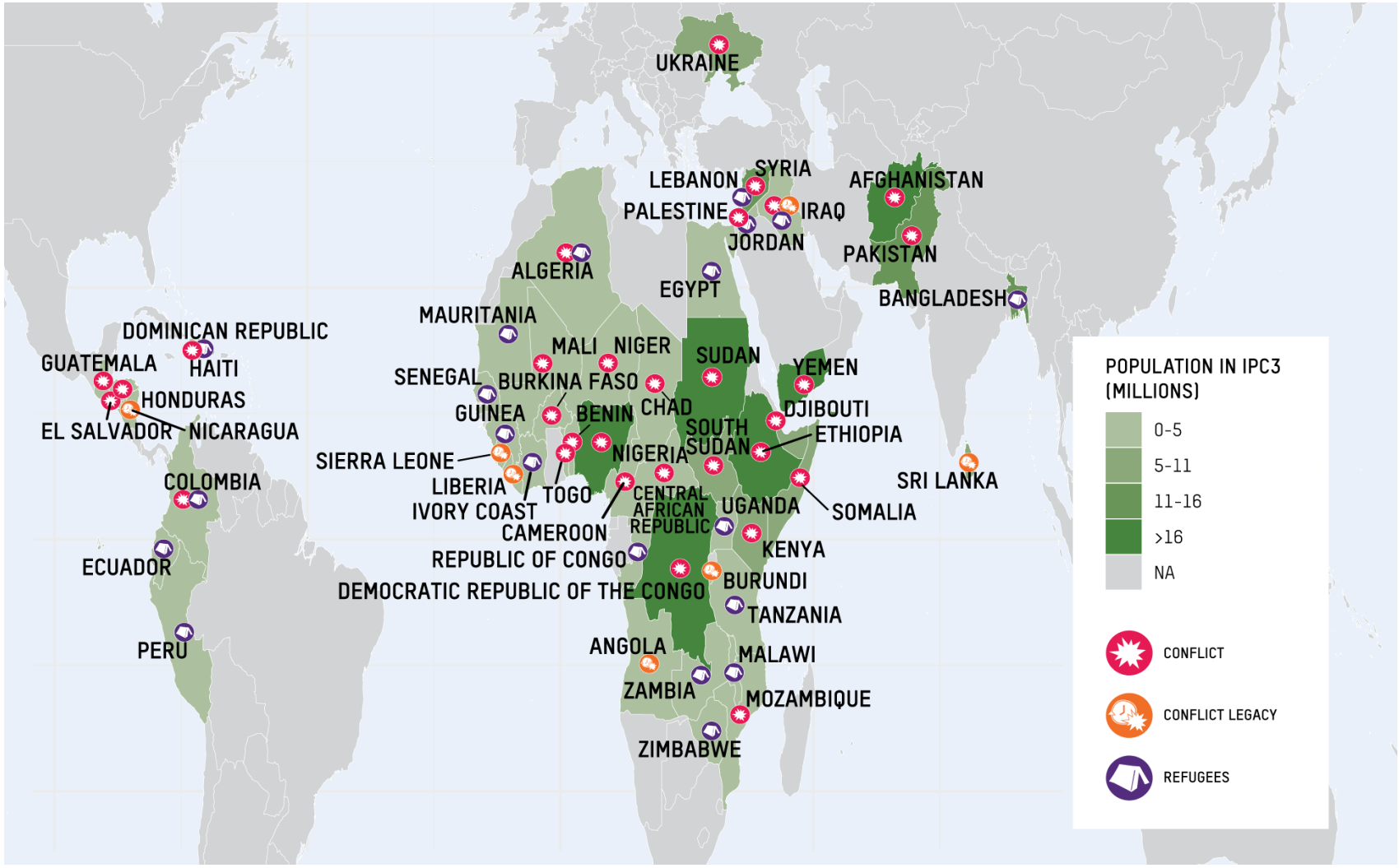
Although most post-conflict development projects address rural areas and agricultural assistance, many Burundians see land-based livelihoods as a dead end from which they seek to escape through education, migration, and hard work. Development aid likely focuses on restoring rural food production livelihoods, offering fewer solutions to the lack of non-farm and urban jobs. Ideas about how to improve urban livelihoods might be strengthened by spending more time listening to local people and local projects that privilege listening methodologies.

Beyond their desire for increased economic opportunities, Burundians who experienced the conflict point to multiple criteria for peace. These include but are not limited to the emphasis that conflict analysts and policymakers put on counting the number of deaths.[27] Additional considerations include the individual's capacity to lie down and wake up without experiencing the threat of violence, and to have hope for a future free from hunger, poverty, and inequity.

CONFLICT REGIONAL CLUSTERS

The map of conflict and hunger in 2023 (Figure 1) reveals that these forces frequently spill across national boundaries. At the same time, the intersection of armed violence and severe food insecurity may be concentrated in a particular subnational region or regions. Political-geographic and economic regional clusters, which are conflict neighborhoods, are characterized by fragile and fractious political regimes. Repeated coups and violence have disastrous and deadly cross-border political and food-system implications, which include refugees in urgent need of emergency assistance. Situations are made worse by taxation of humanitarian assistance, looting, or destruction of emergency humanitarian aid and stored food supplies, including local foodstuffs produced in connection with agricultural development projects that focus on food self-reliance, and widespread violence, including toward women and children.

FIGURE 1. FOOD WARS COUNTRIES



Sources: *GRFC 2024* (see Footnote 1); World Bank; World Fact Book.

The conflict *regions* that are identifiable in Figure 1 connect parts of multiple countries sharing common livelihood challenges (e.g., severe multiyear droughts; volatile markets for principal export commodities, including coffee, cocoa, and cotton; sanctions; border closures) and political instability related to cultural, political, and economic drivers. These drivers, which include refugee flows, and militia or gang violence in many cases connected to illicit commodity flows, either underlie or spark violent conflict, or both, in multiple neighboring countries. These are also regions experiencing high food prices associated with pandemic shut-downs and additional food-chain disruptions connected to the Russia-Ukraine war. Conflict-prone border areas of Sudan/South Sudan/Uganda/Chad, Chad/Central African Republic, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Ethiopia/Somalia, DRC and several neighboring countries, Bangladesh and neighboring countries, India/Pakistan, Pakistan/Afghanistan, Guatemala/El Salvador/Honduras, and Colombia/Venezuela are some examples of multinational places and border areas experiencing continual population spillovers, illicit trafficking and commerce, and violence.

We also identify a conflict cluster centered on the Lake Chad region and neighboring countries, which encompasses the West African cotton belt. This region suffers deep-rooted economic underdevelopment and political instability tied to structural violence, factors which fan violent militant movements across borders.

GLOBALIZATION: DOES ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL TRADE FAVOR WAR OR PEACE?

There is a longstanding academic and policy debate as to whether increased engagement with the world economy has peace-promoting or conflict-potentiating effects (or neither). Proponents of the "liberal peace" continue to insist globalization creates substantial disincentives for conflict, particularly interstate conflict, due to the high costs of disrupting economic ties.[28]

Critics note that globalization also tends to create winners and losers in most countries, and frequently leads to increased inequality, which in turn heightens risk of internal conflict.[29] Liberal peace proponents point to the importance of social protection and other forms of state intervention to mitigate such risks but acknowledge that such policies can be expensive.[30]

Most peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts are firmly grounded in a neoliberal approach that sees foreign direct investment (FDI) and an export-oriented economy as a foundation for peace. However, as analysis of FDI in the aftermath of the 2007–2008 world food price spike crisis indicated, focusing on land and product market liberalizations without establishing

inclusive and legitimate governance can worsen inequality, put low- and middle-income countries that are emerging from conflict into a dependent position in the Western-dominated global economy, and create the potential for a resumption of conflict.[31]

In Sierra Leone, the government and donors promoted large-scale foreign investment in land as a way to create jobs—particularly for unemployed youth—and boost tax revenues as part of post-conflict reconstruction. A study of a 40,000 hectare plantation developed by a multinational company to produce sugar cane for ethanol found that the project actually resulted in resentment among many local people. Some were unable to obtain jobs, which went to people from other communities, while those who worked on the plantation complained of low pay and poor working conditions. The company acquired much of the land for the project through leasing arrangements, and dealt exclusively with older male household heads, excluding women and youth from land-use decision making. All these grievances can potentially lead to renewed conflict.[32]

Reliance on Primary Product Exports Heightens the Risk of Conflict

Table 1 indicates that nearly half of the food wars countries (26 of 54 countries) are engaged with the global economy, with a merchandise trade share of GDP exceeding the global average of 45.8%. The Table also shows that a majority (34 of 54 countries) rely mainly on primary product exports, such as food, agriculture, and extractive industry products, or light assembly and low-end manufactures.

Research indicates that trade can help facilitate peace, at least indirectly, by fueling economic growth. However, natural resource abundance and dependence on high-value export cash crops can also contribute to the outbreak of civil war, especially where primary products, such as cocoa, coffee, and cotton dominate exports.[33] In Latin America and Asia, clearing of forests for commercial agricultural activities—particularly the cultivation of soy and oil palm, as well as livestock raising—often in violation of local laws and regulations, can deprive indigenous people and other communities of their livelihoods. In some instances, land acquisition involves violence and forcible displacement of local people. In parts of West Africa, cultivation of cocoa is likewise a key driver of deforestation.[34] Mining operations, notably in Central America, have similarly led to violent conflicts with the affected communities, leaving people displaced and no longer able to live in resultant degraded and polluted environments.[35]

Agricultural conflict commodities, in addition to illicit drug crops (opium poppy, coca), include lawful commodities, control over which can be used to fund armed forces and violence. Past examples include cocoa in Cote d'Ivoire and coffee in Burundi.[36] Arguably, in 2022–2023, disrupted supplies and markets for grains, oilseeds, and sugar in the Russia-Ukraine war can be considered conflict commodities as well, given their weaponization by Russia.

The notion of regional clusters discussed earlier is also pertinent to agricultural export commodities. An important question for conflict analysis is how volatile prices and lack of local producer and processor control over markets influence conflict dynamics at a regional level as well as within countries. Relevant clusters include cocoa, e.g., the West and Central Africa cocoa zone, and the West Africa cotton belt. Coffee in the Greater Horn of Africa (and elsewhere) is a commodity for which prices can determine the difference between subsistence and food insecurity and influence political and conflict dynamics.[37]

The regional nature of this challenge implies the need for regional solutions. The Abidjan Agreement on cocoa between Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, for example, attempts to regulate cocoa markets and prices for African producers, processors, and marketers, and also mitigate the environmental destruction and hunger associated with cocoa production.[38] Such multi-country actions potentiate more coordinated response to economic, climate, and biological stressors. The cocoa agreement promises a more unified response to higher energy and input prices, basic and export crop market-price volatility, higher temperatures and distorted moisture regimes, and more widespread and damaging pests. By promoting price stability, the agreement has the potential to de-link export commodity production and conflict.

A 2008 study concluded that:

> it is not export cropping per se but rather the structures of production and markets and the context of food and financial policies that determine local household incomes and peaceful or belligerent outcomes. Contrasting Central American experiences with coffee production suggest the important role of national government policies in assuring peaceful and equitable results. In Latin America and Southeast Asia, conflict was avoided when the prices of key export crops collapsed when there were alternative livelihood sources and peaceful outlets (such as electoral politics in Brazil) for discontent. These experiences offer lessons that should be followed up in Africa.[39]

Sixteen years on, this conclusion remains valid. All societies need well-functioning markets, but one cannot assume economic growth will lift all boats equally. Large-scale private investment —whether foreign or domestic in origin—adds to political economic instabilities when investors seize control over land and water resources and displace local peoples. Markets for high value agricultural commodities, as well as extractive-industry products,[40] need to be more carefully vetted and regulated, so they do not fund and fuel more political, geographic, ethnic, and religious conflict.

Merchandise Trade as a Share of GDP

In addition to offering evidence of the conflict-hunger link, Table 1 also provides a gauge of globalization via each country's share of merchandise trade in gross domestic product (GDP) for the food wars countries in 2023. The average across the 54 countries, 53.8%, exceeds the global average of 45.8%, as well as the average for low- and middle-income countries (41.5%) and for Sub-Saharan Africa (42.2%). While these figures do not demonstrate causality, they show a correlation between the level of globalization and food wars. Merchandise trade obviously does not represent all aspects of globalization (which also includes trade in services and financial flows, including official development assistance and remittances), but it is a reasonable proxy for a country's level of globalization, and data are available for most countries and territories.[41]

These merchandise trade statistics are reported to the World Trade Organization and World Bank by the member states. Such official statistics obviously miss illicit trade or financial flows, such as sales of illegal drugs. Such sales may account for a large share of a country's economy; the UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that in 2021, income from Afghanistan's illegal opium-related economy totaled between $1.8 and $2.7 billion, or up to 12% of GDP.[42] Moreover, drug trafficking is often a key source of conflict finance, and conflicts offer fertile ground for drug production and marketing to flourish, as in both Afghanistan for opium and Colombia for coca.[43]

A Bright Side to Globalization?

Globalization is not just about broader and deeper global economic connections and liberalized trade and capital flows. It also includes international norms and institutions promoting humanitarianism, human rights, social justice, and fair trade, as well as international efforts to regulate trade in blood commodities (i.e., conflict-related commodities such as "blood

diamonds" and the corresponding Kimberly Process) and arms (e.g., the Landmines Convention). Together these aspects might be called "globalization's bright side."

Major voluntary instruments seek to encourage private-sector actors to engage in corporate social responsibility and sound environmental, social, and governance practices. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights is probably the best-known example of these.[44] However, voluntary frameworks have so far neither consistently produced responsible environmental and labor outcomes nor ensured sourcing that upholds human rights and advances gender equality. Voluntary certifications by chocolate companies that they are avoiding the use of child labor in their supply chains, for example, though well-intentioned, have proved inefficient and inadequate to address this pervasive issue.[45] More effective safeguards must address factors that contribute to making conflict more likely. These include various types of social exclusion based on race, ethnicity, political-geographical location or cultural identity that are often connected to extreme poverty and involuntary displacement. Such concerns could prove particularly relevant for global businesses investing in natural resource extraction or raw agricultural commodities in conflict-prone places.

In addition, more comprehensive efforts are needed to link export crop production to efforts to achieve peace, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental restoration. In Colombia the Cocoa, Forests, and Peace Plan is a multi-stakeholder initiative, supported by the Colombian and Swiss governments, international NGOs, and the private sector, aimed at bolstering the livelihoods of small-scale cocoa farmers and efforts to combat deforestation.[46] Fair trade organizations such as Equal Exchange (itself a worker owned cooperative) seek to link socially conscious consumers to cooperatives of small-scale farmers, including female cultivators, who produce organic coffee, tea, chocolate, and other products.[47] Scaling up such initiatives to transform production of conflict-related commodities in ways that promote just and peaceful rural economies, resilience, and gender equality remains a work in progress.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND PROGRAM APPROACHES RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR HOLISTIC APPROACHES … BUT OFTEN COME UP SHORT

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AS A DRIVER OF FOOD INSECURITY

Conflict in the 2020s is firmly in the sights of food-security policymakers and program implementers who seek to identify and eliminate the causes of persistent hunger. Over the past decade, UN agencies and humanitarian organizations have made conflict-hunger links a prominent theme, as have academic studies. For example, the 2021 UN report on the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* concluded that:

> the frequency and intensity of conflict, climate variability and extremes, and economic slowdowns and downturns have increased significantly. The increased occurrence of these major drivers, now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a rise in hunger and has undermined progress in reducing all forms of malnutrition, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.[48]

In a similar vein, the World Food Programme (WFP) found in 2022 that 60% of those affected by severe hunger lived in or had been displaced from zones of armed conflict.[49] A 2023 report highlights cases where food insecurity drives recruitment to violence, and how armed groups appropriate food or export crops to fund their operations and coercion of communities. It calls for greater conflict sensitivity in food assistance programming, so that it can help foster peace in historically conflict-prone places.[50]

Political and policy frameworks also have strengthened the legal foundations for international interventions in food wars situations. These include wider support for making the human right to food the reference point for food policy and UN Security Council Resolution 2417, adopted in 2018,[51] which condemns intentional starvation as a war crime. Yet these new international norms have not yet fostered accountabilities for "starvation crimes."[52]

As Table 1 and the sources on which it is based show, the reality on the ground instead is a proliferation of conflicts and food insecurity across Sub-Saharan Africa, where economic disruptions tied to COVID-19 and Russia-Ukraine war disruptions to food and fertilizer trade have left millions of people in situations of violence and acute food insecurity. Contributing to the increasing trend in conflict worldwide, the 2020s have seen levels of military spending and global

arms sales comparable to those of the Cold War.[53] As a result, "zero hunger" and "leaving no one behind"—two key watchwords of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—so far remain distant dreams.

BETTER ANALYSIS AND MORE COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSES ARE NEEDED

Conflict analysis, in part for reasons related to international humanitarian law, continues to focus on the distinction between "external" (interstate) and "internal" (civil-war, intrastate). Whether the warring parties are from the same or different countries does not particularly affect the impact of conflict on hunger, but that does not make the distinction irrelevant from a food-security perspective. There is evidence that it is much more difficult to achieve sustainable peace in the aftermath of civil war, which often includes food-system destruction,[54] with conflicts likely to recur in a decade or less.[55] Sustainable peace after such conflicts also requires people who have been killing each other, often for decades, to collaborate, or at least co-exist. All this suggests that civil wars are likely to have more enduring hunger effects, as a case study of Colombia illustrates (Box 3). Efforts to end hostilities need to be anchored in multilevel processes that can build social cohesion and reconciliation and enable affected populations to move forward.[56]

Box 3. Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC), Colombia

In 2016, Colombia's government signed a peace agreement with the country's largest armed rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (known by the Spanish acronym FARC). Unfortunately, violence and insecurity continue in the country, as the ELN guerrillas and various nonstate armed actors associated with illegal economies fight each other for territorial control and against the Colombian armed forces. And the problems of unequal control of land and other productive resources that helped trigger decades of conflict remain far from resolved. The concentration of land in cattle ranching, mining, oil palm, and the production of illicit crops such as coca have displaced more than 8,498,868 people, most of them peasants.[57] Displaced people rely mainly on food aid to survive.[58] Land mines are an additional barrier to peaceful recovery. Their removal raises local concerns about who will control the newly reopened land. War might be temporarily suspended, but this does not indicate a sustainable end to hostilities and hatreds.[59]

Historical data on ongoing violence in Colombia come from the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC). This dataset is event-based and includes more than 21,000 war-related episodes in over 950 Colombian municipalities from 1988 to 2005. It is based on media reports, information from a network of Catholic priests, reports from human rights organizations, and data from the National Police. Given the large

number of sources used, CERAC is regarded as comprehensively covering conflict throughout the country.[60]

CERAC tracks casualties among both civilians and combatants.[61] The database details the numbers and plight of civilians caught in the grip of violence, whether hot conflicts or civil unrest, and related food insecurity, water insecurity, personal insecurity, disease, and death.

Official and NGO attention to the Triple Nexus is expanding, as are efforts to link the SDGs to basic human rights and rights-based development approaches—or what is encompassed within the overall pursuit of human security. This pursuit emphasizes conflict prevention, addressing the underlying causes of risk and vulnerability, and promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. But the human security approach is sadly under-used. From a real or practical ground perspective, a return to this approach, which recognizes the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights, along with multiple related and inter-related concepts of *security,* including economic and personal security—with attention to gender-based violence and other gender dimensions—presents a more robust and realistic way forward.[62] It has the potential to end cycles of grievance that fuel the persistence or resurgence of violent conflict, while promoting food security and a global economy that works for everyone, not just the top 1%.

For the aid and development community, the adoption of more holistic national development strategies must encompass food-systems approaches that protect and promote the right to food and livelihood security, as well as policy approaches and frameworks that might more effectively consider conflict, globalization, climate change, and gender justice in food and nutrition policy and planning. This requires greater attention to local conflict histories and fractious social contexts: stronger mechanisms to prevent and resolve conflicts, as well as political commitment to provide needed levels of humanitarian assistance that will prevent hunger in moderate as well as severe forms in equitable ways and development assistance that integrates and builds local capacities for food-system resilience in potentially volatile places.[63] To support this, donors must commit to humanitarian and development financing that breaks down conventional funding silos, while taking a Nexus approach to conflict-sensitive programming.[64] Such an approach must support, recognize, and value women as change agents and leaders in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding, in keeping with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security of 2000.[65]

A concrete example of Nexus programming comes from Mali. In the war-torn Ségou region, including the Office du Niger zone, Oxfam works with vulnerable people, including rural women, who lack access to land, farm inputs, and know-how. To build resilience, the agency encourages the adoption of agroecology, which helps restore drought-ravaged land, and humanitarian cash transfers, which can help sustain conflict-affected people and also restore production equipment for long-term development. In addition, Oxfam supports the engagement of women and youth in peacebuilding committees that help manage conflict, strengthen social cohesion, and press the authorities to respect people's rights.[66]

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Fully harnessing the potential of food systems to contribute to peace will demand good contextual evidence, well-grounded knowledge of the setting, and cooperation among peace, humanitarian, climate, and development actors, with local actors playing a leading role. Private-sector actors, all along the value chains of these export-commodity products, not without controversy, are also instrumental in finding and supporting pathways forward that favor peace, not violence, and move beyond the status quo.

Specific policy recommendations favor revisiting the human-security framing and working within view of a longer historical and regional context that is sensitive to conflict legacies and dynamics. Additional recommendations concern the Triple Nexus and identification of additional research needs in view of global volatilities in climate, commodity, and in particular, food prices, and politics and associated violence, especially where food is used as a weapon. Many of the recommendations are not new. But it is crucial for policymakers to go from repeated rhetorical endorsement of these general recommendations to prioritization and effective implementation of specifics. Civil society partnerships will be essential to bringing peace-building into economic planning in conflict-legacy countries and conflict-prone regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An institutional architecture incorporating a Nexus approach that breaks down silos among humanitarian and development assistance and peacebuilding needs to include better funding instruments that can address short-term spikes in humanitarian needs and finance both long-term development and also peace efforts. These efforts need to address the root causes of conflict and fragility, which include economic and political inequalities and divisions, and make sure outside aid does not exacerbate perceptions of unfairness. All of this is as much art as science, as the specific context matters greatly, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Governments, with support from donors, should:

- Make human rights, including the right to food, central to food system planning and transformation[67]

- Develop more resilient food systems that can address the impacts of conflict and climate change while also ensuring food, nutrition, and livelihood security, in both rural and urban areas,[68] for example by supporting community-level food reserves

- Invest in peacebuilding and transitional justice practices with the active inclusion of civil society, youth, and women, strengthening food and economic systems to meet social and economic rights, in keeping with a Nexus approach

- Guarantee tax-exempt status for humanitarian assistance

- Implement post-conflict economic development strategies that avoid fostering or exacerbating inequalities and making renewed conflict likely;[69] such strategies should emphasize equitable access to land ownership, including for women

- Promote more conflict-sensitive market and trade arrangements and regulations, especially for agricultural export commodities and oil, minerals, and gas.[70]

Regional organizations should develop better monitoring and early warning/action systems around conflict, food insecurity, and humanitarian action, drawing on the international legal framework outlawing starvation as a weapon of war.

The international community should:

- Ensure the international peace/security architecture is fit for purpose, especially to prevent international crimes, including the use of starvation as a weapon of war

- Strengthen international accountability mechanisms to combat impunity and deter the use of starvation as a weapon of war

- Ensure meaningful early warning and action long before warnings of "famine" to prevent acute hunger
- Mainstream a Triple Nexus approach in a way that fully supports human rights, particularly the right to food.

The private sector, in keeping with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,[71] should respect human rights in all aspects of its operations,

and should seek to avoid entanglement with violent conflict all along the value chains.

Research institutions, in collaboration with governments and donors, should continue to enhance the quantity and quality of relevant data for decision-making, and to make sex-disaggregated data available. In particular, IPC should consistently collect and report on sex-disaggregated data.

More research is needed on the relationship between export crop production, supply chains, and food wars:

- Examine in greater depth the role of agricultural export commodities in country and regional economic and conflict dynamics
- Analyze the structure of production—whether export crops are produced mainly by large-scale investors (foreign or domestic), or by small-scale regional and local entrepreneurs, including female producers—and how these arrangements influence inequality and violence
- Map the environmental impacts and how these may relate to violent or peaceful outcomes; the impacts include deforestation linked to expansion of cocoa and coffee, and environmental degradation tied to cotton, which displaces food crop production
- Explore examples of more effective ways, at multiple scales, to link export crop production to sustainable and resilient livelihoods, food security, gender justice, environmental protection, and peace.

ANNEX

WHAT IS IPC?

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a widely used tool for measuring food insecurity and acute malnutrition. It focuses on severity, timing, location, numbers of people affected, causes, and the people most affected. IPC's Acute Food Insecurity Scale covers five phases:

- **IPC 1:** No or minimal acute food insecurity
- **IPC 2:** Stressed
- **IPC 3:** Crisis
- **IPC 4:** Emergency
- **IPC 5:** Catastrophe or famine

Households experiencing IPC 1 are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income. Those at IPC 2 have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.

Households at IPC 3 either have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition, or are only marginally able to meet minimum food needs by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies. At IPC 4, households either have large food consumption gaps, very high acute malnutrition, and excess mortality, or they are able to mitigate the gaps but only through emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.

Finally, households experiencing IPC 5 have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. For a famine to be declared, an area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.[72] In areas where IPC operates, a famine declaration follows the findings of a Famine Review Committee, composed of independent international food security and nutrition experts who are seen as objective and who have technical knowledge and experience in the specific crisis context. Other global and regional experts may also be invited to support the analysis.[73]

For IPC acute food insecurity phases 3–5 ("crisis-level acute food insecurity"), associated daily crude death rates range from 0.5 to greater than 2 per 10,000 people affected.[74] For IPC 3 alone, the range is 0.5–0.99 daily deaths per 10,000 people. Because these crude death rates do not distinguish between hunger-related deaths and other causes of death, we subtract 0.22 daily deaths per 10,000 affected people to reflect "normal" deaths.[75]

Given the figure of 278 million people at IPC 3+ in the 54 countries in Table 1 and in the main text, and using the daily crude death rates (CDRs) linked to IPC 3,[76] we estimate that in 2023, conflict-induced food insecurity was associated with between 7,784 and 21,406 deaths per day. This is a conservative estimate, as we are not factoring in the higher CDRs associated with IPC Phases 4 and 5. We make the following calculations, based on the CDRs for IPC 3, to obtain the range of daily deaths cited in the main text:

278 million/10,000 = 27,800

27,800 x .28 = **7,784**

27,800 x 0.77 = **21,4**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was written by Marc J. Cohen (Independent Consultant. Former Oxfam Lead Researcher) and Ellen Messer (Tufts University and Boston University). The authors are grateful to Chika Kondo, James Morrissey, Laura Neumayer, and Nabila Parijat for assistance with data collection and visualization; to Eric Muñoz for project management; and to reviewers of multiple drafts whose comments greatly enhanced the briefing paper.

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