FEATURE

FOOD SECURITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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The right to food is one of those most consistently mentioned in international human rights documents, but it is the one most frequently violated in recent times. Targets set by the World Food Summit in 1996 for the reduction of hunger have largely failed, despite food production having grown faster than world population. Global, national and human security issues are increasingly converging, and in some regions overlapping. Some 840 million people worldwide are malnourished, the highest percentage of these being in Africa. The magnitude of the problem in Africa has now reached unprecedented crisis levels—some 38 million people face "an urgent and imminent threat to their peace, security and stability".

The reasons why action plans to address food security have continued to fall short can be attributed to faulty analysis and faulty actions. What is needed is an understanding that goes beyond conventional, orthodox wisdom to work more strategically in developing and implementing effective, international, national and regional policies. Availability, access and affordability are all elements of food security, complex issues that encompass a wide range of interrelated economic, social and political factors, internal and external, which challenge Africa's ability to address food security. Ultimately hunger is a political creation which must be ended by political means.

Introduction

No human right has been so frequently and spectacularly violated in recent times as the right to food,[1] despite the fact that it is one of the most consistently enshrined rights in international human rights law, as constantly reaffirmed by governments. Concerns generated by the food crisis of the mid-1970s led to world leaders accepting for the first time the common responsibility of the international community to abolish hunger and malnutrition. Nevertheless, between 1980 and 1998 per capita food consumption in the 48 Least Developed Countries declined, while for developing countries as a whole it improved.

Worldwide the trends are alarming as progress in reducing hunger in the developing world has slowed to a crawl and in most regions the number of undernourished people is actually growing, despite the fact that world food production has grown faster than world population in the past three decades. The latest estimates indicate that some 840 million people were undernourished in 1998–2000—11 million in the industrialised countries, 30 million in

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countries in transition, and 799 million in the developing world.[2]

The 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) set a target of a reduction in the number of hungry people by at least 20 million every year between 2000 and 2015. While some regions made impressive progress over the two decades preceding 2000, demonstrating that hunger is not an intractable problem,[3] the latest figures on numbers of undernourished worldwide reveal that since the 1996 WFS, the average annual decrease has been only 2.5 million, far below the level required to reach the WFS goal of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015. Progress will have to be accelerated to 24 million per year, almost ten times the current pace, in order to reach that goal.[4]

The consequences of worldwide hunger are only now being appreciated. At the 2002 WFS the chairperson stated: "Together with terrorism, hunger is one of the greatest problems the international community is facing."[5]

James Morris, executive director of World Food Programme (WFP), in his address to the UN Security Council in December 2002 about Africa's food crisis, said:

> Never before has WFP had to contend with potential starvation of this magnitude on the African continent with the simultaneous outbreak of two enormous and complex crises exacerbated by HIV/AIDS and economic policy failures. The reality is that right now 38 million people in Africa alone face an urgent and imminent threat to their peace, security and stability ... This is an unprecedented crisis, which calls for an unprecedented response.[6]

In its response the UN Security Council acknowledged its concern that Africa's food crisis is a threat to peace and security.

Africa, which reversed from being a key exporter of agricultural commodities into being a net importer,[7] has the highest percentage of undernourished people and has shown the least progress on reducing the prevalence of undernourishment in the last 30 years. Chronic food insecurity now affects some 28% of the population—that is, nearly 200 million people who are suffering from malnutrition. Acute food insecurity in 2003 is affecting 38 million people in Africa who are facing the outright risk of famine, with 24,000 dying from hunger daily. Famines are the most visible and extreme manifestation of acute food insecurity. Of the 39 countries worldwide that faced food emergencies at the beginning of 2003, 25 are found in Africa.

The African continent is now the continent receiving most food aid, with some 30 million people requiring emergency food aid in any one year. Sixty per cent of the WFP's work now takes place in Africa. Aid officials have estimated that their budget for Africa is $1.4 billion for feeding those who will face starvation in the coming months if they do not receive considerable food assistance.[8] It is of great concern that only $700 million had been raised by the end of 2002.[9] The hunger crisis spans the entire continent and has grown particularly acute in the wake of two major, simultaneous regional emergencies in the past year. Southern Africa is facing the most severe crisis in which, according to Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) latest figures, 16.7 million people are in need of emergency assistance to survive until the next harvest in April 2003. This has been a crisis that has emerged in slow motion, the extent of which has become apparent only gradually although the first warning bells were rung as early as mid-2001. During the course of 2002, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Lesotho each declared a national disaster and appealed to the international community for help. The most dangerous situation is developing in Zimbabwe, a country which until recently was a surplus food producer. Developments in Swaziland and Mozambique are also of great concern. The continuing response to the food crisis has not stabilised food security and with the 2002/03 crop already compromised and food shortages likely to increase, the current emergency conditions are worsening. This crisis is not going to disappear even with

improved climatic conditions; these countries will need ongoing assistance for many years to come in agriculture and health.

Serious food shortages are also looming in several countries in the Horn of Africa where at least 17.5 million are without sufficient food. The needs are most urgent in Eritrea and in Ethiopia where it is feared that this crisis could be as bad as the 1984 famine. Families have started migrating from the worst areas, while pastoralists are seeing their livestock—their only source of wealth —dying in droves. Millions more also face starvation in the long-running disasters in war-afflicted Sudan and Angola, as well as the Great Lakes region and the Sahel of Western Africa.[10]

An intractable problem?

If the continent's resources far exceed its needs, how can it be that there is so much hunger? Why is it that countries that have millions of hungry people are exporting food to countries where people are already well fed? Why is it that countries that are poor, with so many hungry people, seem to be able to grow food quite abundantly? What will promise greater food security?

In the 1970s and 1980s solutions proposed were purely technological, stressing production rather than equitable distribution of food. These failed, for the problem is not technical. Population pressures have been seen as a cause of world hunger—they may be an aggravating factor, but they are not a cause. Weather and climate have also been a convenient scapegoat, yet an abundance of food can and does exist alongside famine even in natural hazards.

In December 2002 an international conference on food security attended by eight regional groups in Africa was held in Abuja, Nigeria to seek urgent measures to check Africa's severe food crisis. At the Abuja meeting held under the auspices of FAO, the African Development Bank (ADB) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), FAO director-general Jacques Diouf stressed the severity of the crisis in African agriculture and the need for urgency in finding a way out of the food plight. Action plans to address food security have continued to fall well short. Faulty analysis has led to faulty actions—what is needed is an understanding that goes beyond conventional, orthodox wisdom.

Definitions of food security

Interest in food security has waxed and waned over time, particularly in relation to changes in the extent and nature of food problems worldwide. The 1975 UN definition of food security reflected the thinking of the day, which focused on adequate production at the global and national level. This was also a conventional view of food as a primary need. Food security is, however, a matter of both limited food availability and restricted access to food. Amartya Sen has been credited with initiating the paradigm shift in the early 1980s that brought focus to the issue of access and entitlement to food. Food insecurity is no longer seen simply as a failure of agriculture to produce sufficient food at the national level, but instead as a failure of livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food at the household level. Today, most common definitions begin with individual entitlement, though recognising the complex interlinkages between the individual, the household, the community, the nation and the international community.[11] In the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security, food security is defined as:

> Food that is available at all times, to which all persons have means of access, that is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and is acceptable within the given culture.[12]

Availability, access and affordability are all elements of food security, complex issues that encompass a wide range of interrelated economic, social and political factors—internal and external—which challenge Africa's ability to address food security.

Analysts generally believe that Africa's

current food emergencies are the result of a combination of problems that range from drought and adverse weather patterns and civil conflict, to political-economic crises, HIV/AIDS and poor policy decisions. No single factor is uniquely responsible. Southern Africa is no stranger to natural hazards, but this time a very broad area has been affected by drought and many countries did not have strategic grain reserves. There are also a far higher number of dependents and more child-headed households, because of HIV/AIDS. What is undeniable is that "Africa's persistent vulnerability is arguably due as much to a failure of understanding as to a failure of interventions".[13]

'Natural hazard' famines

Regular droughts are a fundamental part of the climate in Southern Africa where there is normally an exceptionally high variability in rainfall and temperatures. One of the main variables influencing the current crisis in Africa is not just the fall in production because of variable weather patterns—primarily drought but also floods—but that the magnitude and frequency of extreme events is increasing. The past two years have brought the highest number of weather-related disasters over the decade, and according to the UN World Meteorological Organisation, nine of the 10 hottest years since 1860 have occurred since 1990.[14] An FAO study has predicted that climate change will cause severe drought in Africa and that by 2050 an additional 30 million Africans could be affected by famine.[15]

Environmental factors impact heavily on agriculture, and agriculture in turn has a substantial impact on the environment. There are increasing reports of land degradation, deforestation, waterlogging and salinisation contributing to the declining ability of Africa to feed itself. Lesotho is a case in point. Agriculture in this small country faces a catastrophic future, with average farm yields having declined by more than two-thirds since the 1970s. Soil erosion is spreading fast, and soil fertility is deteriorating even further. During the course of the last few months of 2002, the start of summer, Lesotho experienced unseasonal weather in the form of frost, cyclones and hail.

While the issue of food security is directly linked to climate change and variability, weather is not the single determinant of yield, nor is the physical environment the only decisive factor in shaping food security.

Conflicts

Drought and conflict often interact so closely that they are inextricable as causal mechanisms. There are a growing number of new and worsening conflicts that are increasingly violent and long lasting. Virtually every country that has suffered famine in the past 20 years has suffered a war at the same time—this is particularly true of famines in the 1990s. While Africa has experienced many droughts, they were generally managed with reasonable efficiency. It has been the combination of war and drought that has caused large-scale suffering and death. Of the 25 countries in Africa facing food emergencies in 2003, ten are currently experiencing civil strife, and four are emerging from conflicts.[16]

War and political upheaval are major contributing factors to famine, the impact being felt at household and national level. At best agricultural production is interrupted, but in protracted conflicts such as Angola, production is devastated. Other direct economic outcomes include price changes for basic commodities, closure of markets, destitution and displacement, disruption of trade and aid flows. Evidence of environmental degradation and competition for natural resources can be found in many of the internal and even transboundary conflicts that contribute to many complex emergencies. Conflicts are also more likely to deflect scarce resources into military budgets (to feed armies and purchase weapons) and away from critical development needs resulting in collapsed infrastructure. In terms of the proportion of undernourished people, the Democratic

Republic of Congo is one of the worst performers, the number of undernourished people having tripled in recent years.

Famine may not only be a by-product of war, it may also be an instrument of war. There are many cases in Africa of political interference—certain groups may be more vulnerable because of deliberate indifference or even victimisation by the government, coupled with the lack of political power of these groups. Evidence abounds in both Angola and Sudan of wide-scale starvation because of lack of access by aid organisations to those in need, and also of deliberate victimisation on the part of the government. In Angola civilian populations, which were the target of both parties to the conflict, were under constant patterns of attack and reprisal for the three years prior to the ending of the war, displaced by force or threat of force, and their villages and homes often burned down as well as systematically plundered, preventing them from growing or harvesting crops and depriving people of basic resources. And as Stephen Devereux appositely states:

> Most food crises in the Horn of Africa during the 1980s and 1990s were characterised by government hostility to the afflicted population, or by bad relationships between the national government and the international community.[17]

There are also many factors that exacerbate emergencies, undermining the production of food and economic access to it.

Structural poverty

Widespread and abject poverty and hunger are getting worse in Africa, but improving almost everywhere else. Nearly half the population of sub-Saharan Africa lives below the international poverty line, a higher percentage than in any other region. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence of undernourishment[18] and has shown little progress in reducing this in the last 30 years. Undernourishment is a central manifestation of poverty; and as poverty worsens, food becomes more important than ever. It deepens other aspects of poverty by reducing the capacity for work and resistance to disease, and by affecting children's mental development and educational achievements.

Food insecurity and hunger are closely related to poverty and an inability to purchase food. Tackling hunger cannot be solved by simply producing more food—famines have occurred even with plenty of food. Most people buy food rather than produce it; in fact very few people, including small farmers, are entirely self-sufficient in production. What we are witnessing in Southern Africa, in particular, is that as harvests have failed, so people have resorted to selling off livestock and assets to finance food purchases, while simultaneously food prices have risen sharply and livestock prices have fallen.

In asking who are the food insecure, where are they located and why are they food insecure, we see that when disasters strike, the poor and socially disadvantaged suffer the most and are the least equipped to cope with the impact. Most of the populations living in these areas are poor and lack sufficient housing, infrastructure and services that can mitigate the impact of a disaster. They may also live in flood-prone or geologically unstable areas, or farm marginal lands. Demographic changes, environmental degradation, changes of river, dam and land management and other factors increase vulnerability. Susceptibility to natural hazards aggravate the adverse effects of these natural events, particularly in the least developed and conflict-ridden states.

Reduced fresh water availability, linked with potential reductions in rainfall, is increasing the risk of water contamination. It is essential to note the connection between undernutrition, lack of potable water and diarrhoea, which is one of the world's five biggest killers.

Security of land tenure is not only a determinant of food production—land is an essential resource for many people if they are to escape poverty. The distribution of land in eastern and southern Africa is so

unequal that land reform and land redistribution is essential if there is to be a major reduction in poverty. Land reform programmes have enormous potential to increase agricultural production—but it is essential that they be accompanied by comprehensive programmes of agrarian reform including access to credit, savings and markets in rural areas if they are to fundamentally redress the inefficiencies of inequality.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS, the unmitigated disaster, is not simply a health issue, but also of vital importance across a spectrum of issues including development, security, food production and life expectancy. The rapid spread of the epidemic is both a reflection of poverty, which does not cause it but certainly aggravates it, and it is in turn driving a ruthless cycle of impoverishment, resulting in a rapid increase in the number of poor and destitute families, reversing decades of development.

The current food crisis is inextricably linked to the widespread HIV pandemic that has deepened the crisis. Sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest hit region, with nine per cent of the population infected. In Southern Africa, which is at the epicentre of the pandemic, infection levels average around 25% of the population, 58% of the affected being women. Where women participate in agricultural production, food security at the household and community level is being seriously threatened. All dimensions of food security—availability, stability, access and use of food—are affected where the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high. Farming skills are being lost, agricultural development efforts are failing, rural livelihoods are disintegrating, productive capacity to work the land is declining and household earnings are shrinking. In the ten most affected African countries, labour force decreases ranging from 10–26% are anticipated. The UN estimated that 9.6% of Zimbabwe's agricultural labour force was lost in 2000, Malawi losing 5.8%.[19] What we are seeing in Southern Africa is that the food shortages are now exacerbating the downward spiral of health, both of those suffering from HIV/AIDS and children suffering malnourishment. Traditional safety nets are breaking down. The effects on households are significant and the African extended family is not able to cope with this double burden of care.

In essence we see that the relationship of HIV/AIDS to food security is bi-directional: vulnerability and food insecurity feed into the very risk behaviour that drives the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the impact of HIV/AIDS exacerbates food insecurity, which again feeds into risk.

Economic crisis

All of the above has to be seen in the context of the structural distortions and imbalances in the region's economy—some 60–70% of the labour force is in agriculture, which contributes less than 20% to gross domestic product (GDP), while 30% of the labour force is in industry and services which contribute 90% to GDP. This vulnerability to sudden economic downturns in countries that already lack the capacity and infrastructure to cope with them can heighten the level of the disaster.

A number of key countries in the region are plagued by poor macro-economic performance. Coupled with economic integration within the region it has meant that the downward trend has had ripple effects throughout.

Ethiopia's response is hampered by global economics—the sharp fall in coffee prices has cut incomes for many farmers, and the country is still labouring under a heavy debt burden. Donors have been uneasy about donating millions to a government that seemed to prioritise spending on war rather than on health and education.

The interplay between governance and economic development performance has undermined efforts to address issues. Famine is not just an 'economic disaster'. While the lack of purchasing power at the individual and household level can be attributed to

poverty, it is frequently also the result of political disasters, not just conflicts, but failure in the political accountability of governments, and even political interference, as has been the case recently in Zimbabwe.

Politics

Politics hold centre stage in both current regional dramas in sub-Saharan Africa. In Zimbabwe, failure of governance—both through lack of accountability and an opposition to democratisation—and in particular, the way in which the land reform programme has been instrumentalised and implemented, has resulted in a severe undermining of the previously robust agricultural economy. Despite the fact that the land reform programme offers both promise (in the longer term) and threat, there is currently concern over the under-utilisation of newly settled land and the possibility of lower crop yields. At the end of 2002 an estimated 90% of the 300,000 Zimbabweans who were given land by the government under the current land reform programme still lacked farm inputs and some 94% did not have seeds for the upcoming season. The situation is further aggravated by the uncertainty of tenure as it appears that the government still owns the land, making it difficult for farmers to access credit at the banks. By the end of 2002, Zimbabwe's average farming output was down by about 75% from the previous year. Financial mismanagement in Malawi's sale of the country's strategic grain reserve has also played a crucial role in contributing to the food crisis there.

Elsewhere, in Eritrea, for example, parts remain inaccessible due to landmines, and since the war with Ethiopia ended, the government has become increasingly repressive. Despite the ending of the civil war in Angola there are several areas in which people cannot be accessed because of landmines and collapsed infrastructure.

Capacity to respond

Disasters are not merely natural phenomena —they are an interplay of a combination of several factors—of hazards and communities at risk. Southern Africa is no stranger to droughts, and people have coped with them before. The question increasingly being asked is: Why not now? People facing a food shortage make strategic decisions about how to meet their needs: options range from informal safety nets in which people draw on their social networks, to eating less and cheaper meals and even scrounging for fruit and seeds, or more desperate measures shifting in intensity from the selling off of assets to migrating off the land. What we are witnessing in Southern Africa at household level is a slow erosion of people's coping mechanisms, which is exposing a more deep-seated and complex problem of vulnerability.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that many countries and regions that are vulnerable to natural hazards lack the capacity or are poorly prepared to respond. The capacity to organise at country level a set of people who can identify the problem, analyse the information that is coming from the ground and design solutions in order to prevent famine, is either not there or is not being utilised. The policies, institutions and capacities have to be in place to respond and mitigate. There are, nevertheless, many cases of successful famine prevention, including Kenya and Botswana in the mid-1980s and Zimbabwe and South Africa in the early 1990s. However, what is clear is that recovery and rehabilitation efforts that address the root causes of chronic food insecurity and vulnerability to drought have been extremely limited.

The wider context

There is a perception that Africa has underperformed in macro-economic terms, but in fact according to World Bank statistics[20] Africa has not lagged behind the world as a whole: its growth rate in the period 1990–96 was 2.1% as against Latin America's 2.5%, East Asia's 4.0%, South Asia's 3.0%, and 0.8% for high income economies.[21] Food production has in fact

increased by over a quarter in the last two decades, but not fast enough in terms of per capita production. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where the annual growth of GDP per capita has been negative, at –1.0% between 1975 and 1999, compared with 6.0% for East Asia and the Pacific and 2.3% for South Asia.

Improving the poor performance of Africa's stagnating agricultural sector is a key to solving the problems of hunger and poverty since this sector is at the heart of food security. Relative to the rest of the world, agriculture is especially important in Africa—with small-holder agriculture being the predominant source of livelihoods in Africa. Agriculture employs a greater share of the labour force than in any other region (apart from East Asia and the Pacific). Over 96% of farmers operate on a small-scale, farming less than five hectares. The sector, however, is characterised by weak linkages to markets and little or no access to external inputs. Many small-scale farmers farm degraded land; most are far from services and roads and consequently from extension programmes.

Public investment in African agriculture has been falling for many years. Aid to agriculture and rural development in the late 1970s accounted for more than a third of total aid. In the late 1980s, that figure dropped to 24%. It is now closer to 10%.[22] World Bank lending has fallen from around 31% of its total lending in 1979–81 to less than 10% in 1999–2000.[23] Poverty strategies of developing countries make little mention of agricultural and rural development as sources of poverty reduction. Government budgets for agriculture have declined.

While the Green Revolution succeeded in improving yields, it led to serious environmental problems. Ignoring traditional crops (which also led to a movement away from the more appropriate, drought-resistant indigenous crops such as millet and sorghum to a maize monoculture), and the staples of poor farmers, resulted in the growing concentration of ownership of land and resources in the hands of the rich and a focus on cash crops. This has exposed farmers because of the decline in worldwide prices for traditional export commodities.

And yet, small-holder agriculture has proved to be at least as efficient as large farms when farmers received similar support services in inputs like seeds, fertiliser and credit. A recent FAO study has revealed that small farms tend to be more productive and offer more employment to surrounding populations than large estates; the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in a 2001 report estimated that for each one per cent rise in agricultural productivity, poverty would be reduced by 0.6%.[24] The FAO is now calling for additional public investment by developed and developing countries into on-farm improvements such as irrigation, better seeds, conservation of the natural-resource base for food production, improvement in research and extension, upgrading of rural infrastructure, improved market access and special provision for people in particular need.

These are sentiments that are increasingly being echoed the world over. The World Bank's new rural development strategy calls for an increase in the percentage of resources devoted to rural development. Going beyond the food crisis, NEPAD recently announced that it has identified agriculture as a priority for sub-regional and regional approaches to development and as an engine of growth in the improvement of people's livelihoods in the rural areas. The NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which anticipates investment of $240 billion by 2015, focuses on three priority areas where increased investments would help improve Africa's agriculture, food security and trade balance, these are:

- extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems;
- improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access; and
- increasing food supply and reducing hunger.

Globalisation and the role of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

There are close links between hunger and food security on the one hand, and a large number of issues of global relevance on the other. The adverse impact of structural adjustment and liberalisation policies on food security and agriculture, along with persisting trade barriers, the overall downward trend of official development assistance (ODA), agricultural subsidies in the North, and debt burdens in Africa are just some of the issues highlighting the need for international co-operation as an instrument for addressing food insecurity.

The advent of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the early 1980s, which were presented as the panacea for all economic ills, have contributed to a marked increase in rural poverty, and an increase in vulnerability to external shocks.

> Between 1960 and 1980, before SAPs, income per head in the region grew by a third. Between 1980 and 1997 it fell by a quarter. Part of the problem was that higher income from export crops did not materialise. In mid-2001 the price of every major traded agricultural commodity, with the exception of sugar, was substantially lower, by way of example, than in mid-1998.[25]

Market reforms put forward by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the ideologically correct development path rejected notions of government intervention. As a result, much of the region was compelled to reduce its interventions in the economy, a move that included ceasing the subsidisation of agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and privatising the commodity boards that fixed producer prices and collected farmers' produce. Ironically these handicaps have been further compounded by policies in the North—at the same time that African farmers have been told they can no longer have free seeds or fertilisers, the EU and the US have maintained and actually sharply increased subsidies and support for agriculture. US farmers are receiving an average $20,000 a year in subsidies—soon to be increased by 70%—and EU farmers receive $16,000.[26] A downstream effect is that of subsidised surpluses which undercut the prices of African foods in their own markets. It is something of an anomaly that rich countries heavily subsidise a declining agricultural sector, which, at maturity, contributes less than five per cent to GDP.[27]

Since the mid-1990s the developed countries have made promises to phase out protectionist policies and to scale down agricultural subsidies. Despite these, tariff barriers in rich countries are higher for poor countries than for industrialised countries and Northern governments have increased agricultural subsidies; countries representing four-fifths of the world's population are now left with less than one-fifth of world exports.[28]

The practice and rules of international trade play a key role in achieving world food security and fostering agriculture. Free trade is not good for everyone and African countries face huge barriers in establishing an agro-export economy to trade their way out of poverty because of tariff barriers and produce dumping by European and US producers. Trade rounds ostensibly benefit the whole world by enhancing competitiveness, expanding the marketplace to increase trade volume and enhancing the value of the goods we trade. These assumptions are based on fundamentally flawed principles. Trade has the potential to contribute to food security, but in practice two sets of rules have been enforced: one for those allowed to and responsible for distorting the market through tariff and non-tariff barriers, and those—the developing countries—who were not and are now legally prohibited from doing so. It was reported at the June 2002 WFS that "OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries provide a billion dollars a day in support to their own agriculture sector, six times more than all development assistance" and also that the annual loss of income to developing countries from lack of market access exceeds $10 billion.[29] In fact the level of ODA,

which was partly intended to compensate for the inequities of the global system, has been declining even in absolute terms to less than 0.2% of gross national product, instead of the moving towards the internationally accepted target of 0.7% of donor countries. At the same time that the developed countries are providing their agricultural sectors with subsidies totalling $350 billion a year, agriculture's share of ODA has declined to the point where it is now a sixth of the total ODA provided to developing countries.[30]

Conclusion

It is no longer tenable for the world to throw money at the problem of widespread hunger. Planned humanitarian support is not an end in itself. A much more strategic approach is necessary in developing and implementing effective international, national and regional policies with regard to food security. In tackling the causes, the centrality of growing structural deficiencies must result in increased recognition of the long-term nature of revising approaches to food security. Responses must combine food assistance and new approaches to farming, alongside the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The WTO urgently needs to be restructured to include the active participation of the poorer countries, and it must be restructured to provide more assistance. Developing countries should benefit more from the removal of trade barriers for products in which they have a comparative advantage, from reduced tariffs for processed agricultural commodities, and from deeper preferential access to markets for the least developed countries.

Greater recognition must be given to agriculture as a priority sector in Africa, including the allocation of increased funding in national budgets as recommended by the African ministers of agriculture.[31] Competent and enduring responses must include issues such as community access to land and land tenure, preservation of agricultural diversity, access to credit and agricultural inputs, seed sourcing and access (commercially or locally), and ecologically based land management. Among the lessons being learnt from the current food crisis in Southern Africa is the need for a common approach to early warning and analysis systems that monitor both HIV infection rates and famine indicators. Also required are new agricultural techniques, appropriate to a depleted workforce.

The balancing of the immediate food aid issues with long-term and strategic considerations requires a multifaceted approach covering political, economic, social and environmental factors. Nevertheless, what is paramount is the political will to tackle the problem. As James Morris, executive director of the World Food Programme, said in his address to the UN Security Council:

> In the end, hunger is a political creation and we must use political means to end it.

For the outcome to be beneficial to Africa requires that her leaders, thinkers and communities be foremost in the decisions that are taken. For coherent and sustainable positions to be adopted requires regional and shared decision making.

What is needed urgently now is not charity alone, but justice if a comprehensive security is to be achieved, recognising that the protection of individual citizens (human security) matters at least as much as the more traditional defence role of protecting the state (national security). Global, national and human security issues are not merely converging, they are overlapping. In the words of Jacques Diouf:

> It is in the interest of all countries to establish a more equitable world. The cost of inaction is prohibitive. The cost of progress is both calculable and affordable.[32]

Notes

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2 FAO, *The state of food insecurity in the world*, 2002, p 1 <www.fao.org>
3 There has been a decrease in the number of undernourished people in developing countries such as China, Peru, Indonesia, Nigeria, Thailand, Vietnam, Brazil, Ghana, Pakistan and Sudan. T K Rajalakshmi, Hunger amidst plenty, *Frontline (*19)1, 5-18 January, 2002.
4 FAO, *The state of food insecurity in the world*, p 1.
5 *World Food Summit news*, Five years later, 10-13 June 2002.
6 World Food Programme, 3 December 2002, <www.reliefweb.int> p 2.
7 The FAO has stated that Africa's annual food imports are the equivalent in hard currency of $19 billion, while its agricultural exports are valued at $14 billion. SAPA, 9 December 2002, reporting on the Africa Food Security Conference in Nigeria.
8 J Morris, executive director of the World Food Programme, briefing the UN Security Council in December 2002.
9 Ibid.
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13 Devereux and Maxwell, op cit, p 2.
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