

WORLD POLICY ANALYSIS: FOOD INSECURITY IN YEMEN AND BURUNDI

Rian Dijta and Ashley Hill
Vanderbilt University

Background

Food is one of fundamental aspects of human existence. However, not every country is food-secured. A definition from the Food and Agriculture Organization stated that food security is achieved when people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food and its form is always composed of four dimensions: food availability, access to food, food utilization and stability over time (FAO, 1996; FAO, IFAD, & WFP, 2013). Thus, it is important for every country in the world to be able to be food-secured. Providing access to food for a country's citizens will bring positive long-term impacts ranging from economic growth and job creation, poverty reduction, trade opportunities, increasing global security and stability, and improved health and healthcare (USDA, n.d.). According to United Nations World Food Programme (WFP, n.d.), people are considered to be food secure when they have availability and adequate access at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

However, according to the FAO, IFAD and WFP (2013), globally there are 842 million people—12 percent of the global population—who are unable to meet their dietary energy requirements and lived undernourished between 2011 and 2013. This is down from 868 million reported for the 2010–2012 period in last year's report. The vast majority of hungry people—827 million—live in developing regions, where the prevalence of undernourishment is now estimated at 14.3 percent in 2011–2013.

Besides, the concept of food insecurity is not a simple concept of the inability of a country providing foods for its people. There are a lot of other factors involved. According to Premanandh (2011), the global food situation is redefined by many driving forces such as population growth, availability of arable lands, water resources, and climate change. Additionally, food availability, food accessibility, and food loss, combined with the effect of aforementioned factors, has undeniably impacted global food production and security. The Harvest Help (2012) added that severe food insecurity and crises are the combination of several complex factors. Some of the most common causes of food insecurity in Africa and other developing countries were: 1) Drought and other extreme weather events; 2) Pests, livestock diseases, and other agricultural problems; 3) Climate change; 4) Military conflicts; 5) Lack of emergency plans; 6) Corruption and political instability; 7) Cash crops dependence; 8) AIDS as it reduces the available workforce in agriculture and puts an additional burden on poor households; and 9) Rapid population growth. By looking at all of the factors contributing to food insecurity, it can be said that it is both caused by external factors (agricultural and geographical factors) and internal factors within countries (political stability and war as well as the local policies applied). Certainly, food insecurity has a strong link with poverty and famine within countries, especially in the developing ones. Statistically speaking, every 3.6 seconds one person dies of starvation, and usually it is a child under the age of 5, making food insecurity is one of the major causes of the high rate of maternal and infant mortality across the globe (UNICEF, 2018).

Research Questions and Purpose of the Research

The research question being examined is: *What are the contributing factors to Yemen and Burundi's current severe food insecurity status, and what are the effects of such factors on society?*

This research question was chosen based on several considerations. First, because the food security issue is an issue formulated on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and continued in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The MDGs were set by 189 countries in September 2000 to achieve eight measurable goals that

range from halving extreme poverty and hunger to promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality by 2015. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development carried on the momentum generated by the MDGs by developing a new set of Sustainable Development Goals, which were to be carried out from 2015-2030 (SDGF, 2018). It is important to know the progress of each region combating these issues, in order for countries to be held accountable in fulfilling the goals. Second, the food insecurity crisis in several countries like Yemen and in Sub-Saharan Africa has come to global attention. Third, it is important to know about the causes and effects of food insecurity in certain countries and what policies have been implemented to help them reach the level of food security. It is expected that this study will help us better understand the proper policies in eradicating food insecurity especially in Yemen and Burundi.

Case studies

Yemen and Burundi were intentionally chosen to be analyzed in order to show the various needs and solutions of each country because of their unambiguous differences. These two countries represent different rankings in the Global Food Security Index (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018) where Burundi became the lowest ranking country at 113th. That poses an interesting connection to Yemen, ranked at 110th. Yemen was selected because of the current famine crisis. Despite their differences, successful policies used to create food security will later be identified for the purpose of proposing policy recommendations for countries in a current state of severe food insecurity.

Yemen.

As discussed before, one of the factors contributing to food insecurity is war and political instability within the country. Yemen is an example in this case. Yemen's National Food Security Strategy Committee explained that they had tried their best in achieving national food security since the crisis started in 2011. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2011) added that this committee aimed to achieve three objectives: 1) cut food insecurity by one-third by 2015, 2) make 90 percent of the population food secure by 2020, and 3) reduce child malnutrition by at least one percentage point per year. They wanted to achieve these objectives by applying the 7-point Action Plan for Achieving Food Security in Yemen: a) Reform petroleum subsidies. This was the government plan to shift the focus on giving high subsidies on petroleum to increase quality of food security. b) Improve the business climate by inviting more companies and private sector organizations, especially in the agriculture

sector, to help Yemen with managing the food security issue. c) Reduce the production and consumption of khat (cathinone from plants) as it consumes a great amount of water. Water supply is one of the concerns in this region. The government wanted to focus more on enabling farmers to have more water supply and limiting the use of water for producing khat. d) Improve food security risk management by establishing special forces and involving government officials to focus on this issue. e) Implement the water-sector strategy by building more facilities especially in areas that most need it, and distribute the water equally to all agricultural landscapes. f) Target public investment and improve service provision; and g) Launch high-level awareness campaigns by working together with schools, government officials and other related parties (IFPRI, 2011).

However, these 7 action-plan steps from the government committee seemed to fail as the condition in Yemen is far from getting better year by year. According to the Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA, 2017) with the humanitarian, political, economic, and health crises happening in Yemen since 2011, as of 2017, more than 63% of Yemen's households have to cope with limited access to sufficient, nutritious food and are eating less than the minimum required to live a healthy life—compared to 41% in 2014. Poor food consumption has increased by 44% over the past two years. EFSNA (2017) also added that the nutrition status of Yemeni children aged between 6 to 59 months has been compromised, with an estimated 2 million children acutely malnourished, increasing the risk of morbidity and death due to preventable disease such as diarrhea. This condition is also worsened by the fact that the government cannot control the price of oil and gas and other essential commodities, as well as failing market and trade systems and many other related problems. Not only that, but according to IFPRI (2011), in Yemen's case, the fact that the government cannot export enough goods and services due to the political instability made it hard for them either to import foods or simply increase the production-side potential in the country. From 2014-2016 acceptable food consumption and dietary diversity significantly decreased by 38.3%. Additionally, more households are indebted for food during this time period and generally, the trends related to hunger increased (EFSNA, 2017). Furthermore, in regard to the Global Food Security Index areas of Affordability, Availability, and Quality and Safety, all three of these categories are labeled as being deteriorated in Yemen (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

Burundi

According to the 2018 Global Food Security Index, Burundi ranks the lowest amongst every country analyzed on the issue of food security (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018), and it is also the hungriest country in the world according to the World Food Program (WFP, 2018). With the second lowest GDP in the world and

the highest chronic malnutrition presence globally, there is such a prevalence of undernutrition in Burundi because of issues such as poverty, poor access to clean water, and worsening access to basic health and education. Additionally, the country has had a history of civil conflict that led, in part, to this crisis. Burundi currently hosts 36,000 refugees, and political instability has led to an almost 50 percent decrease in contributions from international donors (WFP, 2018).

When it comes to the government of Burundi's policies and strategies, their development strategy revolves around the Burundi Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework II, which is outlined by its six objectives: 1) controlling population growth, 2) stimulating agricultural production and marketing activities, 3) more effective public spending, 4) a dynamic private sector, 5) significant increase in electricity production, and 6) strengthening human resource capabilities, institutional structures and legal and institutional frameworks (USAID, 2013). Though this framework is in place, its effectiveness is questionable on the issue of food security because the government has no physical security stock to release to markets at subsidized prices between harvests, and there is no financial reserve that could be used to purchase staples during times of need. Due to the socioeconomic status of most people in the country, and lack of physical food stock or ability to ensure agricultural production, objectives 2 and 3 weaken the framework. This framework also lacks in addressing chronic malnutrition due to difficulty integrating actions by multiple actors.

Though the government's actions have not been as successful as anticipated, one of the main methods developed in addressing Burundi's food security crisis is the USAID/Food For Peace (FFP) Title II Program, which was created to span from 2014-2019. This five-year Food Assistance Development Program was implemented in Muyinga province, which is a densely populated and underserved area, with the highest rate of chronic malnutrition in Burundi. Using the AMASHIGA approach (European Evaluation Society, n.d.), this program was designed for three purposes: 1) mobilize whole communities and improve health care to reduce chronic malnutrition, 2) improve economic well-being through improved agricultural production, NRM, and access to credit, and 3) strengthen resilience, governance, and policy implementation through learning. There is also an important cross-cutting component to the approach that focuses on households and communities adopting gender-equitable decision-making practices. The overarching goal of this program is to improve optimal nutrition for mothers and children in Muyinga, that can hopefully be replicated on a national level. The Title II Program did not become fully implemented until October 2016, and no annual evaluations can be found on the success of the program, or lack thereof.

Data and Analysis

Yemen

The main source of data analysis used for Yemen's case are from the EFSNA (2017) and the Global Food Security Index (2018). From the data, it can be concluded that:

1. The conflict happening in Yemen has major impact, bringing more than 60% of the populations suffer in food crisis and emergency. In the period of 2014-2016, poor food consumption had affected one in four households across the country with an increase of 44% despite the fact that actually there was a slight improvement in this sector between 2011-2014.

2. Total households that consumed poor quality of foods were not equally distributed across the country. The areas that had the most hardship of food security were the ones on the borderline or areas where conflict was still taking place. This because of the fact that most ports or channels and roads to distribute food were blockaded. EFSNA (2017) also stated that "the extensive damage to road infrastructure and the closure of main roads are additional factors limiting the availability of food items, triggering stark food price increases and at the end have devastating consequences for Yemen's food crisis" (p. 10). As a result, those most affected by food insecurity are those who live in the rural population, the displaced, households headed by women or by illiterate household heads. Recently, insecurity affected more groups including those who live in cities or even those who work for government.

3. With the scarcity of the basic needs due to the blockade and limited supply, the prices of foods and other basic needs are increasing. In February 2017, according to WFP price monitoring as quoted from EFSNA (2017), the national average price of wheat flour was 37 percent higher in February than the pre-crisis period. Similarly, prices of red beans, sugar, and vegetable oil increased by 62%, 33%, and 13%, respectively, during the reporting period compared to those recorded in February 2015.

4. Another effect of this high price and scarcity of basic needs such as food is some changing of eating habits for the people in Yemen. Sixty-two percent of households were forced to adopt food-related coping strategies (rCSI) such as reducing number of meals and limiting portion sizes, compared to only 48% in 2014 (EFSNA, 2017). Some of them also started to rely on more aid and assistance, begging, or other types of strategies.

Overall, the indicators or factors failing in Yemen in regard to its food security sector are as follows: Firstly, its ability to afford for foods for its citizen. This can be seen

from the food consumption as a share of household expenditure, its GDP, presence of food safety net programs, and access to financing farmers. This was worsened by the long-standing conflict happening there. Secondly, it was worsened by availability of food supplies, political stability, and infrastructure. During the time when much infrastructure was destroyed because of conflict, people could not rebuild their life, and the government could not help much in solving this issue as they were still dealing with its political instability and conflict (EFSNA, 2017). Finally, all of the policies about food security in Yemen are hard to analyze due to overshadowing of conflict there. However, one thing that is certain is that this condition is affecting the quality of the people there. Malnutrition and famine are common things that most of the people there need to deal with. (EFSNA, 2017).

Burundi

In examining Burundi, it was found that gender inequality, post-conflict and political instability, and climate shock were undeniably linked to the country's current food insecurity status. Quantitative data in this section is being analyzed from the 2018 Global Food Security Index, and the 2018 Human Development Data (Gender Inequality Index, Work and Employment). Qualitative data being analyzed comes from the Gender Analysis Final Report 2017.

Gender inequality and food availability.

Burundi ranks 113th overall on the 2018 Global Food Security Index, and it also ranks 113th in the category of food availability (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). The connection between gender inequality and food availability is evident within Burundi's labor force. Overall, women account for 80.2% of the labor force participation, whereas men account for 77.5%, and 91.5% of employment is in the agricultural sector (UNDP, 2018). Additionally, women account for 62% of the hours worked in land preparation, planting, cultivation, and harvest, working between 15-19 hours per day compared. The male work day is only 5-13 hours, yet women receive only receive a small portion of sales revenue, do not receive the same technical capacity-building as men, or hold leadership positions in agricultural organizations. Men have opportunities to participate in training on improved agricultural technologies, of which the knowledge acquired is not shared with their wives, and they also are the deciding factor on what crops will be planted where, and when is appropriate to use new technologies. Moreover, Burundi ranked lowest on inheritance rights of daughters; women's secure access to land use, control, and ownership; and women's secure access to non-land asset use, control, and ownership, which limits the ability for single, married, and widowed women to produce food (USAID, 2017). In turn, the inefficient

distribution of labor, technology, and productive inputs reduces availability of food at the household level (USAID, 2017).

Climate shock

According to Burundi's Systematic Country Diagnostic, over a 60-year time period, Burundi has experienced alternating cycles of excess and deficit rainfall for almost every decade. The country also experiences an increase in mean temperature, contributing to a lengthening dry season. For example, Burundi was severely affected by the El Nino climate phenomenon in 2015 when heavy rain and dangerous floods extended past the usual rainy season (September to December) until the first quarter of 2016. The weather pattern led to damaged crops, which led to food shortages, and increased presence of pests and/or diseases that affect crops and livestock. Rural household livelihoods are distinctly affected by climate shocks, with 25.4% of degradation being caused by water deficits and 15.2% by hail (World Bank Group, 2018). According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index (ND-GAIN, 2014), Burundi ranked 174 out of 178 for its capacity to respond to climate shock. This ranking indicates that it is the 4th most vulnerable country and 20th least-ready country to combat the effects of climate change.

Lack of Post-Conflict Momentum/Political Instability

According to the Food Assistance Fact Sheet from the U.S. Agency for International Development (2018), The Burundi Civil War, which sparked from the country's democratically elected president being assassinated, lasted from a period of 1993-2005, resulting in the death of more than 300,000 people (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018). Civil unrest was sparked again in 2015 when President Nkurunziza, known for enacting legislation to shrink democratic space, illegally ran for and won a third presidential term. As of September 2018, in wake of ongoing political unrest, more than 152,000 citizens were internally displaced and 384,000 fled as refugees into neighboring countries (USAID, 2018). According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, on a scale of 0 ("highly corrupt") to 100 ("very clean"), Burundi scores 22 and ranks 157 out of 180, indicating the country's high level of corruption (Transparency International, 2018). The country's political instability directly relates to the sharp decline in economic activity. Additionally, many of those who were displaced, and some of the 52,000 Burundians who have returned to the country, now face challenges of accessing land to farm, which is both a source of income and food security. Most poor household will be facing stressed levels of food insecurity at least until January 2019 due to the influx of returnees and those displaced (FEWS NET, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Yemen

As the country struggles with its political instability, long conflicts, and a blockade that is affecting its food security, the first thing that can be done for Yemen is increasing international focus on solving those problems. This can be done with the help of the United Nations and other international donors giving aid or urgent humanitarian assistance to the people so that the vulnerable population can cope with their problems immediately. This help can also be used to build infrastructure or facilities needed to build their own agriculture sector because more than 60% of Yemen's people rely on it (IFPRI, 2011). In the long term, according to EFSNA (2011), the government can develop a prioritization strategy of assistance and continue regular food security and nutrition through special committee and re-implement the 7-Action plans of the IFPRI mentioned in the beginning of this paper. The reason it was not effectively implemented at first is because before they implemented the framework in its entirety, the civil war took place. Once civil war becomes contained and more aid is given, along with constant monitoring, it is worth trying to implement this framework as it clearly identifies the fundamental dynamics of addressing issues of food security. Moreover, ongoing international publicization regarding the crisis to bring awareness to other countries will put pressure on the government to do something about this issue. Hopefully, increased global attention, along with international aid, will help Yemen's government take action in combating the civil war in the country and focus more in improving the food security.

Once the political stability can be attained there, Yemen's government can also start working on an open trading system with other countries (making sure that the channels of trade are no longer blockaded) and monitor the price of the basic needs of the people there so they can afford fulfilling their basic needs. These goals only can be achieved if the long-standing war and conflict there can be solved in the first place.

Burundi

A few of the main contributing factors to Burundi's current food insecurity situation are gender inequality, climate shock, and political instability. As a result, the country has experienced chronic malnutrition, aggravated cycles of civil unrest, heightened social tensions between Burundian citizens and the government, and economic shock caused by an unaffordable increase in food prices due to climate shock. The contributing factors and societal effects inform the following recommendations for the country of Burundi: 1) Invest in women's empowerment on the local level, because the national increase in women in national leadership has made little impact on individual communities; 2) Invest in an early-detection/warning system, which will

allow the country to be able to prepare for and combat climate change; and 3) Restore trust in the government, recognizing that it will be a lengthy process. Through advocacy, community empowerment, and education, future generations will be equipped with the tools to adhere to sound social justice and democratic principles.

Due to the fact that one of the limitations on this paper is finding complete current data, there might be some other contributing factors to each country's food insecurity status that are not listed or analyzed here. There might be some current new policies and interventions executed in these two countries that result in new situations and contexts that are not discussed here as well. Other related factors or food security policies that are not listed here can be studied further in the future.

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