

Brief on conflict and hunger

**Submitted to: The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development
Committee for the study on situations in Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of
Congo**

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The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies working together to end global hunger. We are Canada's primary non-governmental organization partnering with Canadians and the Government of Canada to provide food assistance in conflict-affected countries. We recognize the importance of this study by the Standing Committee on the situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia and South Sudan. We acknowledge the timeliness of this study considering recent evidence-based reports on the negative impact of conflict on rising global hunger. In this brief, Foodgrains Bank will highlight the state of hunger exacerbated by protracted conflict in DRC, Somalia and South Sudan, and provide recommendations on how Canada can better address hunger in conflict-affected situations.

Context of hunger in conflict

Conflict causes hunger. Conflict is driving severe global food insecurity and increasing the risk of famine¹. DRC, Somalia and South Sudan were among 18 countries in 2017 where conflict and insecurity were primary drivers of acute food insecurity². Conflict forcibly displaces populations, causes destitution, disrupts food production, destroys livelihoods and markets, hinders humanitarian food delivery, thereby compounding hunger and malnutrition.

1. **Democratic Republic of Congo** – there are an estimated 7.7 million people who are food insecure³. The conflicts in Kasai, the Kivus and Tanganyika have intensified food insecurity. Conflict has forcibly displaced populations, depreciated the local currency and diminished purchasing power of households⁴, thus compounding hunger. 4.6 million children suffer acute

¹ UN (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/content/2017-state-food-security-and-nutrition-world-sofi-report>

² Food Security Information Network. Global Report on Food Crises 2018. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/content/global-report-food-crises-2018>

³ IPC. République Démocratique du Congo (RDC). Situation Actuelle de l'insécurité alimentaire aiguë – Juin 2017. Disponible à :

http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_DRC_AcuteFI_Situation_2017JuneDec.pdf

⁴ Ibid

malnutrition with 2.2 million experiencing severe levels⁵. As of December 2017, at 4.4 million, DRC had the highest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Africa⁶. In addition to food insecure IDPs, by August 2018 DRC was hosting 536, 000 refugees from neighboring countries⁷.

2. **Somalia** – An approximate 5.7 million people are food insecure, 2.7 million people need urgent food assistance with over half a million under the threat of famine⁸. 300, 000 children are malnourished, 48,000 of these children suffering severe malnutrition with increasing risk of disease and death⁹. After over twenty years of conflict in Somalia, there are about 2.1 million internally displaced people in need of food assistance¹⁰.
3. **South Sudan** – Approximately 6.1 million people in South Sudan are experiencing severe food insecurity¹¹. There are 1.7 million internally displaced people¹². In 2017, the UN declared a state of famine in parts of Unity state where people were dying of hunger, one million people risked famine and 100,000-people risked starvation¹³. Conflict in Unity, Lakes, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Western Bar El Ghazal not only disrupted agricultural production but also prevented the delivery of humanitarian assistance¹⁴. Conflict adversely impacted malnutrition with about 1.2 million severely malnourished children¹⁵.

Recommendations

On 24 May 2018, member states of the United Nations adopted UNSCR 2417 that recognized the need to break the link of conflict and hunger¹⁶. Further, this resolution condemned the use of starvation as a weapon of war and the denial of humanitarian access in response to conflict-induced famine or food insecurity. UN member states, including Canada, are encouraged to investigate these violations and take appropriate action. There is a need for an improved early warning mechanism that would prompt political action in the case of violation and prevent a deterioration of hunger in conflict settings¹⁷. It is

⁵ WFP. DRC. Available at: <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo>

⁶ OCHA. DRC. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo-drc/about-ocha-drc>

⁷ UNHCR. DRC. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/democratic-republic-of-the-congo.html>

⁸ WFP. Somalia. Available at: <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/somalia>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ UNHCR. Somalia. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/somalia.html>

¹¹ IPC. The Republic of South Sudan. Key IPC Findings: September 2018 – March 2019. Available at:

http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_SouthSudan_AcuteFI_2018Sept_March2019.pdf

¹² Ibid

¹³ UN News. 20 February 2017. Famine declared in region of South Sudan. Available at:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/02/551812-famine-declared-region-south-sudan-un>

¹⁴ WFP. Conflict pushes more South Sudanese into hunger – over 6 million people face desperate food shortages.

Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/conflict-pushes-south-sudanese-hunger---more-6-million-people-face-desperate-food->

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ UN. UNSCR 2417 Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Available at : <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2417>

¹⁷ Conflict and Hunger: How the UN & member states can help break the cycle. An NGO statement for the High-Level event on conflict and hunger at UNGA 2018. By Action Against Hunger, Concern Worldwide, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision.

also imperative to support long term conflict-sensitive approaches that address both proximate and root causes of food insecurity and conflict¹⁸.

Canada is committed to alleviating global hunger. As a party to the Food Assistance Convention, Canada gives \$250 million annually to respond to acute hunger around the world. In addition, Canada supports various food security initiatives including investing in agriculture. By responding to food insecurity globally, Canada is reducing global hunger in conflict-affecting settings. Canada is a signatory to the Grand Bargain and has accordingly increased cash-based food assistance and supported multiyear humanitarian funding. To more effectively address hunger in conflict-affected contexts, the Government of Canada should:

1. Build internal government and partner capacity to effectively analyze the country-specific interactions between conflict and hunger to enable integrated responses that promote long term food security and peace. Canada's comprehensive response strategy to the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh is a good example of an approach that addresses issues along the humanitarian, development and peace continuum. The government of Canada should strive to develop similar strategies to address hunger in conflict-affected countries. This includes conflict-sensitive programming that fulfils the humanitarian mandate to 'do no harm'.
2. Increase its annual commitment to the Food Assistance Convention (from the current \$250 million) to reflect the rise in global hunger due to protracted conflicts. Beyond increasing financial commitment, the government of Canada should maintain and increase flexible and multi-year funding to respond to food insecurity in the immediate and long term. One of the challenges in responding to acute hunger is the delays in disbursement; the government of Canada should increase support to draw-down and pooled funds to allow for prompt responses to hunger.
3. Increase investments in agriculture to enable small scale farmers in developing countries to improve local food systems and achieve food security. A majority of small scale farmers in developing countries are women, so investing in small scale agriculture would additionally secure positive outcomes in women's economic empowerment and gender equality.
4. Canada should actively promote UNSCR 2417 by using diplomatic channels to influence positive compliance by parties in armed conflict. This would include ensuring unhindered access by humanitarian actors to deliver food assistance in conflict-affected areas and to monitor that starvation is not used as a weapon of war.

¹⁸ Action against Hunger, FAO & WFP. Hungry for Peace: A Call to Action. Paris Peace Forum. 11-13 November 2018.